

Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture

Institute of Land and Food Resources

University of Melbourne

1995-2000

## **A Faculty's Fate: Hindsight of Introspection**

Lindsay Falvey

# **A Faculty's Fate: Hindsight of Introspection**

Unreliable reminiscences of the Faculty known as the Institute of Land and Food  
Resources from 1995 to 2000 by Lindsay Falvey

ISBN 1875453164 (~~no document lodged with National and State libraries as yet~~)  
2021 lodged with NLA and SLV)

**November 2002**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Author's Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> <b>The Agricultural and Related Education Debate: Is it Important?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> <b>An Appropriate Context?</b> <b>Global Food, Environmental, and Learning Needs</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> <b>Towards a Merger: The Institute of Land and Food Resources</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> <b>Strategic Planning Outcome:</b> <b>The Process &amp; The Plan</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b> <b>Governance</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b> <b>Management</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b> <b>Course and Students</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b> <b>Marketing and Enterprise</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Chapter 9</b> <b>Research and Internationalisation</b>	<b>121</b>

<b>Chapter 10</b> <b>Polemic</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Chapter 11</b> <b>Phoenix Faculty?</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Chapter 12</b> <b>Epilogue</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>A final word</b>	<b>171</b>

## **Author's Foreword**

As viticulture is usually separate from oenology, so history is best separated from the subjects of the story. In this case, the separation is difficult, as the would-be vintner is the only one interested and informed enough to prepare the vintage. However, the viticulturist's attachment to each of his lovingly tended vines can conflict with his attempts at objective assessment of grape quality, and try as he may, some sour grapes may yet find their way into the vat. Thus this story, while it aims to be objective and fair, may yet be, in parts, a little sour in flavour. Of course, the grower-winemaker may completely misjudge his site, agronomic technique, harvest, and wine making methods in his isolation and never have been likely to produce a palatable vintage. That fate too might also be revealed herein.

The premise on which the book rests is that, having decided to retain a presence in agriculture and related fields, the University of Melbourne undertook to effect merger of its Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry with the colleges of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture and in so doing, create a faculty of significance. The University's investment in the Faculty Plan appeared to substantiate this approach, although higher priority commitments arose with time, and opportunistic actions by vested interests resisted the overall strategy. The apparent success in effecting the merger in the face of historical blockages contrasted with the apparent failure to build on the opportunities of the merger, and, labelled as I was with both, the aura of failure is the more recent memory.

In the event, the Faculty appears assured of a home in the University in at least the medium term, although some staff and sites may move to other institutions. The Faculty itself will provide a home for some staff engaged at an international level in their fields; these staff will likely work individually or in small groups of their own choosing to produce outputs on which the Faculty will rely when endeavouring, probably with declining success, to command competitive resources within the University. However, as one's vision is distorted by the tears engendered from very sour grapes, I remain an unreliable commentator.

The 50 months spent as Dean was exhausting. The challenge, accepted fully, demanded virtually all waking hours in travel, meetings, hosting events, and presentations, as well as participating in University committees ranging from those associated with the portfolio, to the International Programs and Fund Raising committees, and a range of Asian and profile-raising related activities. Some things are worth doing despite their difficulty, and this was such a task. That sentiment lasted until it became evident that the objective was unachievable, as it conflicted with new University priorities. From that point, the short-term task was to ensure that major changes were irreversible before disclosing an intention to relinquish the Deanship. My resignation, maintained as confidential for some months to complete programmed changed, was probably interpreted as a having been requested by some behind-the-throne political intriguers, but in fact, the differences of opinion that such persons stimulated were in fact symptoms of the issue being addressed, but on which the University could not act at the time.

### *Boxes*

The boxes scattered through the text present personal views, many from the perspective of sitting in foreign climes working on other research in the years following my resignation. Reading widely at that time, many words of others seemed apt and reminded me of situations which I unconsciously continued to turn over in my mind. While the un-boxed text is a continuous tale and complete, my personal emotions and thoughts are clearer within the text boxes which are placed between paragraphs on the subjects eliciting the emotion. Both tell a tale, together they tell more than the sum of the two; and yet there is more, for after all, as Wordsworth put it ...

*O Reader! had you in your mind  
Such stores as silent thought can bring,  
O gentle Reader! you would find  
A tale in everything ...*

Such matters matter little. Individuals enter and exit the University, contributing but little compared to the collective output and presence of the institution. For those, apparently few, who conceive true universities like true churches, as critical to civilisation and our society in a manner quite distinct from schools and colleges, the following story may appear tragic. To those who wish to retain education models of the recent past for political reasons, the outcome may appear desirable. To me, it seemed - for the two succeeding years - a shame that such a rare and real opportunity was recognised, acted upon, then apparently squandered. However, I was too close to it to know, and my view is now more one of observing the interrelated and transitory nature of all things, including not just deans and faculties, but even Universities.

JLF

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Agricultural and Related Education Debate: Is it Important?**

As agricultural and related education around the world languishes, the relevant commercial and resources sectors appear increasingly well served by a range of other sources and faculties. This story is one the reactions of a traditional group of agricultural and related educational institutions and concerned persons to their reorientation to a future which would ensure the viability of those institutions. Where once applied plant breeding, soil science, and biochemistry were best represented in agriculturally oriented faculties, today when these complemented by other groups. Opportunities in agribusiness, food science, and resource management now exist for future dominance in a similar applied sense. This story of an opportunity to secure a future of international leadership may be judged by some in terms of publications or university rankings, but to those who saw the grand Melbourne vision for agriculture become a mirage, its fading may be remembered in other terms, some of which may glimmer through these pages.

Conditions to effect momentous change in agricultural education have been conspicuously few, usually limited to the emergence of new countries. Within what has long been a global field increasingly served by educational units beyond those with the agricultural appellation, locally focussed faculties have created a reducing demand for their services. In introducing the changes begun in one State of Australia that had a unique opportunity to combine rectification of past intransigence and setting the direction for at least national changes, the domestic debate concerning agricultural education provides one context. So far as it is but a subset of a more significant global debate, that subject is discussed separately in Chapter 2 to explain how global changes and responsibilities were ultimately considered secondary to local political preferences.

In the 1990s there existed an opportunity to create a world-class faculty for agriculture and related education in the agriculturally important region of Australia. Regardless of the outcomes of current attempts, there remains a continuing responsibility for professionals as government reduces funding, and as parochial attitudes to global resource use become entrenched or resources are rendered into commodities through market mechanisms masquerading as behavioural change mechanisms for environmental benefit. The link between opportunity and responsibility in this context may differ from the Protestant ethic of privilege leading to responsibility; however, the opportunity exists because Australia is one of the few net food exporters and as a consequence has an historical base in agricultural and related education of international significance. The responsibility to feed fellow humans into the future is an additional moral reason to take agricultural education seriously.

The opportunity existed in the State of Victoria through an historical quirk that allowed virtually all higher agricultural education to be consolidated into one redesigned institution. To allow it to wither at such a time due to unpopularity among 17 and 18 year olds, or because of a political focus on major population centres, when global needs were

accelerating is akin to burying one's talents in a time of inflation. Nevertheless, present day pragmatism persistently poses the question as to whether faculties of agriculture and related disciplines are still needed. That question, discussed in the following section, yields an affirmative answer in this thesis, yet raises a subsidiary question concerning the means by which such education is offered. That question is addressed in Chapter 2 in terms of educational technologies and a new conceptual context, and in terms of university management systems at the conclusion of this polemic.

### **Are Faculties of Agriculture Still Necessary?**

Higher agricultural education is in a period of transition that may not be widely recognised among its participants. Throughout Australia, declining enrolments in traditional fields while receiving periodic fillips from new or expanded fields such as wine and food, remain masked by the offering of higher agricultural education by colleges and the renaming of CAEs as universities. A cyclical low in the popularity of science may have also contributed to the 1990's situation, and continues to be an issue. A declining understanding of agriculture itself in the general population also drives down the image of agricultural education. Against this sad scenario, the call for further increases in global food production from a declining land area, and the need for vast improvements in environmental care, seem to be in conflict. While recognising the sometimes fickle decisions which affect the relative popularity of university courses, there are evident imperatives to change agricultural education to acknowledge environmental management, agribusiness, food processing and safety, and lifestyle, among other social aspects of agriculture. Changes in the shape of Australian agricultural education may lead to a small number of comprehensive and adaptable faculties concerned primarily with agriculture linked to international knowledge systems, which support a number of centres where specific examples relevant to a local area can be demonstrated. Overall, one might expect to see less students and staff in traditional Australian agricultural faculties, increased emphasis on agribusiness, environmental management and food safety, and improved links between the sector and all university facilities. The views in this section summarise those of a 1998 address to the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (Falvey, 1998).

The apparent long term decline in demand for study of agriculture at university level has led to traditional agricultural science course continuing to attract some very high performing students that must be mixed with lower scoring students in order to fill courses. This can be understood partially in terms of a general decline in demand for science subjects (Niland, 1998), as well as through factors specific to the study and perception of agriculture in the wider community (Monteith and Field, 1995). Wider university environment in Australia, the current unpopularity of science courses, and the need for increased food production and environmental management provide three pillars to understanding of the dilemma which has sapped initiative from agricultural science education.



### ***Declining Civilisation***

Declining interest in agricultural education, and indeed agriculture in general, may be an accepted fact by universities and the general public, yet it is must be worthy of philosophical comment. Any civilisation that neglects a key to its creation might be expected to be nearing decline. However, today's reliance on technology, and beliefs in the ability to solve current and future environmental and health problems, continue to fuel optimism that sustainable food security has been achieved, at least for the richer nations. Yet this security has only been approached for one group that appropriates the resources of another, and begs the very moral questions of rights and equity that we daily espouse as the basis of our society. This is why agricultural scientists at this time have an additional burden of helping maintain our civilised society through reminding the public not only of the moral responsibilities we have to world agriculture and food availability, but also to the historical origins of our comfortable civilisation. As noted in 1840 by Daniel Webster ... *when tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilisation.*

### **Perceptions and Real Demand**

The university environment in which agricultural courses are offered to Australian students has changed significantly with the rise in the numbers of universities in Australia from 19 to 36 in the past decade and associated enrolment increases from approximately 420,000 to some 660,000 students. Today reductions in higher education spending of 25 per cent over the five years to 2002, and thousands of academic redundancies around the country, indicate a future contraction of the government funded tertiary education sector. In the field of agriculture, some of these reductions in staffing in 1998 included; the University of Queensland shedding some 40 staff and Orange Agricultural College some 30 staff, with the Universities of Adelaide having made statements which imply similar action. Such staffing adjustments may be interpreted by some as simple cost cutting to fit new funding regimes. However, these are respected and forward-looking institutions. Rationalisations may be better interpreted as effective management responses to focus on areas of selected strength. Institutions which do not take this approach appear to be electing for 'default' rationalisation, which could be internally imposed within a comprehensive university, or otherwise occur through natural attrition of good students and staff.

Attempts to suggest that all universities and courses are of similar quality combined with survival responses under circumstances of reducing budgets, have impacted on teaching of agriculture through; oversupply of courses, perpetuation of small faculties and departments, and a strong emphasis on classroom teaching with limited student electives. Yet a critical factor determining the success of a faculty of agriculture is its reputation, which is linked to that of its staff among international peers, fellow Australian scientists and colleagues from other disciplines. Australia's attempts to homogenise courses of practical agricultural colleges and science-based university faculties of agriculture in the

1980s possibly reduced the global reputation of both universities and colleges involved in agriculture.

### ***Pricked into Action***

This paper for the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering provided a platform after the events described in this book and is presented here to highlight part of the rationale, which was not clear to all involved at the time. Placed here it also sets the context for the challenge to improve agricultural education. That some improvement resulted is seen by many as a success; my own feeling at the time was that the great progress was made but a major opportunity was also lost and that the successes are poor substitutes for what was sought. It was a trying path, as indicated by a wisely omitted section from my farewell speech which contained a paraphrased Biblical text from the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9 verse 5, ... '*Saul, Saul, ...*' I read this as ... '*Lindsay, Lindsay, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*'. Continuing to kick against the pricks of conservatism, protectionism, and indeed even the pricks of piousness in the form of invoked traditions, took its toll; yet was worthwhile both personally and for food and the environment in my view. The personal benefit was a shift in my consciousness that continues.

Student choice in studying agriculture or other fields is related to factors of course popularity and indeed financial commonsense. Why should students with high entrance scores with the option of studying accounting, business, or law choose agricultural science with its four-year degree requirements, the need for postgraduate studies to become a specialist, and if aspiring to become a professor, engage in post-doctoral study followed by engagement as a lecturer with limited prospects for promotion to once coveted posts that now yield a salary less than half that of law or business fields? For those few who do choose to study agriculture, society's view of the profession of agricultural science is similarly low among the professions (UWA, 1995).

In addition to the constraints facing agricultural faculties, graduates and students who may choose to enter them, the 'high levels of efficiency' – a euphemism for underfunding – within the Australian university system also constrain both staff and students. Universitas 21, a loose knit organisation of high performing public sector universities around the world including three in Australia, has generated preliminary benchmarking data which indicates that the two universities which have large faculties related to agriculture, are funded at about 70 per cent of that of similar universities outside Australia (UM, 1998).

Understanding the plight of agricultural courses requires some knowledge of the agriculture and science nexus. Statistics of the Federal Department of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) indicate that enrolments for agriculture and related fields have increased by some 72 per cent over the period 1987 to 1997 compared to an average increase across all sectors of 67 per cent (Table 1.1). Niland (1998) notes that, while science enrolments have increased by some 86 per cent, this is biased by areas of rising popularity such as computer and life sciences. The rise in agricultural enrolments may be due, at least in part, to the creep of vocational to higher

education courses that seeks to complement funding from State vocational training with that through higher education.

### ***Resource Allocations***

Budgets for agriculture decline generally around the world compared to other sectors. Observed as a vote of confidence that earlier generations have solved the issue of food production, we may easily grow complacent. This is indeed a risk in our societies at present. However, budgets also decline through an incipient bias against the old to fund the new. As society shifts its views to health for example, this is seldom considered as an aspect of agriculture, notwithstanding such past and current agricultural activities as; genetic modification to enhance food quality, food safety, stress management through gardening, rural vistas, and so on. This is not a new observation: Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) may well have had similar thoughts when he observed that ... *all taxes must, at last, fall upon agriculture.*

**Table 1.1 - Enrolments in Australian Higher Education**

Broad of Study	Numbers 1997	% Change		
		1987-92	1992-97	1987-97
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry	12,124	48.58	15.57	71.70
Architecture, Building	15,187	32.54	27.69	69.23
Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	154,119	30.64	23.26	61.02
Business, Admin., Economics	153,201	61.10	30.82	110.77
Education	71,466	8.29	-8.48	-0.90
Engineering, Surveying	48,958	44.86	12.29	62.66
Health	75,073	79.97	11.75	101.12
Law, Legal Studies	25,401	58.67	41.11	123.90
Science	95,861	56.92	18.80	86.42
Veterinary Science	1,639	15.36	-2.56	12.41
Non Award Courses	5,798	1.05	3.68	4.77
<b>Total Enrolments</b>	<b>658,827</b>	<b>42.07</b>	<b>17.78</b>	<b>67.33</b>

In delving behind increases in science enrolments, Niland (1998) presents figures from the New South Wales Planning Services, which show an increase of some ten per cent of total student load (EFTSU) in agriculture against an overall average increase of some 17 per cent, while physical/material sciences declined by some 12 per cent (Table 1.2). The conversion of some NSW agricultural college courses to degrees may be masking a similar downward trend. This suggestion appears to be supported by other data for New South Wales and ACT courses which indicate a decrease of ten per cent for non-overseas (that is, Australian) offers to students for agriculture, which is the largest decline for any sector and compares to overall growth of some 14 per cent (Table 1.3). Such decline may be influenced by a drop in applications or eligibility for those agricultural courses, which rely on science prerequisites from Year 12. Supporting these figures is a decline of 26 per cent in non-overseas (Australian) students' first preferences for agriculture and related fields. This is the largest decline of all sectors and compares with an increase in first preferences for law and related fields of some 44 per cent, a decrease in interest in veterinary science of some nine per cent, and an average overall increase of four per cent.

In a survey conducted for Niland of the perceived causes for lower demand for science subjects, 50 per cent of persons nominated higher HECS fees, 30 per cent nominated lower salary levels for graduates, and 20 per cent nominated lower levels of funding for essential laboratories and equipment. These causes are mainly recent phenomena and relate similarly to agricultural science. However, rather than being a principal cause of decline in applications for agricultural courses, these may be simply further indicators to potential students that agriculture is not a viable area for one's future.

Victoria is supported by a more reliable, productive and intensive agricultural base compared to other states and despite its small size, often has the highest gross value of agricultural product. Enrolments in agricultural courses in Victoria, have increased in the last decade yet students selecting agriculture as their first preference have decreased (VTAC, 1996). A 1997 survey of Year 10 students in Victoria (Matthews and Falvey, 1997) indicated that while, non-metropolitan students were generally more favourably disposed towards studying agriculture than their metropolitan counterparts, careers oriented to land management and the environment were more enticing than other careers available to agricultural graduates. No distinction was made by students between agricultural technology/management and agricultural science.

An analysis of global agricultural education determined that changes, in the definition of the agricultural sector, in communication technology, and in funding imperatives, will continue to cause re-evaluation of its role (Falvey and Maguire, 1997). Bachelor's degree graduates may be likely to focus on career opportunities in natural resource management and vocationally oriented agricultural production, processing, and marketing fields. The small proportion of agricultural graduates who have aptitude and motivation to work effectively in research will form an important part of the post-graduate agricultural education pool and require specific orientation to the changes occurring in agricultural research systems. Mechanisms which link general agricultural and other education, and research training and researchers, may provide a basis for strengthening overall human resource development in agricultural research systems, both in terms of the management of existing researchers, and the continuous training of new researchers. However, action to meet these needs for institutional changes does not seem widespread; and other faculties increasingly service agricultural research.

**Table 1.2 - Total Student Load (EFTSU) by Branch of Learning in NSW/ACT**

Branch of Learning/Discipline		1992	1997	% Change, 1992-97
Agriculture		7,436	8,196	10.22
Humanities		47,813	56,133	17.40
Social Studies		51,771	62,786	21.28
Education		40,805	41,507	1.72
Science:	Biological Sciences	24,312	28,609	17.67
	Earth Science	4,025	4,049	0.58
	Physical/Material Sciences	8,350	7,375	-11.68
	Pharmacology	1,608	1,966	22.29
	Chemical Sciences	9,273	9,394	1.30
	Other Sciences	3,410	4,208	23.40

Total Sciences	50,977	55,600	9.07
Maths/Computing			
Mathematics, Statistics	22,631	21,657	-4.31
Computer-based Information Systems	14,002	18,788	34.18
Computer Science	10,534	12,170	15.53
Other Mathematics, Computing	647	1,042	61.13
Total Maths/Computing			12.22
Visual/Performing Arts	22,319	25,975	16.38
Engineering, Processing	25,294	29,228	15.55
Health Sciences	39,573	43,401	9.67
Admin, Bus, Econ, Law	96,153	124,644	29.63
Built Environment	10,584	12,977	22.61
<b>Total Student Load (EFTSU)</b>	<b>440,539</b>	<b>514,104</b>	<b>16.70</b>

**Table 1.3 - Offers and First Preferences - Australian Students - NSW and ACT**

Broad Field of Study	Offers 1990	First Prefs 1990	Offers 1996	First Prefs 1996	% Change Offers	% Change Prefs
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry	1,538	1,720	1,390	1,278	-9.62	-25.70
Architecture, Building	993	1,908	1,692	2,378	70.39	24.63
Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences	15,412	19,021	16,830	21,027	9.20	10.55
Business, Admin., Economics	10,049	17,525	12,636	14,848	25.74	-15.28
Education	5,859	8,166	6,302	8,380	7.56	2.62
Engineering, Surveying	3,659	4,187	3,809	4,457	4.10	6.45
Health	6,073	8,838	6,570	10,085	8.18	14.11
Law, Legal Studies	1,392	3,144	2,964	4,527	112.93	43.99
Science						
Computer Sci, Info Systems	1,937	2,471	2,314	2,667	19.46	7.93
Other Science	8,207	8,028	8,090	8,322	-1.43	3.66
Total Science	10,144	10,499	10,404	10,989	2.56	4.67
Veterinary Science	138	482	130	437	-5.80	-9.34
<b>Total Offers</b>	<b>55,257</b>	<b>75,490</b>	<b>62,727</b>	<b>78,406</b>	<b>13.52</b>	<b>3.86</b>

### Answering the Question

From the above one might assume that the answer to the title question of this section .... "*are faculties of agriculture still necessary?*" - would be a firm No. Demand is falling and other faculties can cater for that reduced demand as an adjunct to their other clients, as is acknowledged where agriculture is reduced to a department in a faculty of science otherwise comprised of discipline-based departments. Such a dry response is wrong as it fails to consider a broader picture.

If one analyses statistics for the study of history and the classics, one might find similarly distressing trends. Yet it is difficult to claim that society is not better off for having universities offer these subjects. In modern university parlance, maintaining such (cyclically?) low priority subjects represent cases for *transparent cross-subsidisation*. However, the history and classics argument in itself is not sufficient justification for maintaining agricultural courses. Faculties of agriculture do not claim to be of immeasurable and intangible value to society; they claim, usually a little too proudly, to

provide applied outputs of immediate, medium and long term benefit. A broader context is necessary for the creation of world class faculty in this sector as is outlined in Chapter 2.

Briefly the questioned may be addressed in this way:

- Demand for food is expected to rise at a pace faster than population growth, which might peak at approximately eight billion around the year 2030 (Avery, 1995). Higher food production from a reducing area requires greater general agricultural knowledge among producers and scientific knowledge relevant to food production and the environment.
- Changes in education in terms of the ability to assist learning through electronic multimedia will improve access for persons located away from the sites of major universities. Already it appears that the slowest-moving component of this change is academic staff, which is not surprising considering the high levels of electronic literacy among high school graduates, shifts in their preferred modes of learning, and the difficulties of mid-career academics adapting to these new modes. Traditional drawbacks of difficult access, higher costs of operation, and high teaching intensity all stand to benefit from the technology.
- Shifts in the public requirements of agriculture include an increasing urban bias in determining overall views and rules for the use of rural areas. This can lead to apportioning greater value to rural areas for factors such as preservation of vistas and environmental preservation than to productive agricultural pursuits. The different social approaches of Britain and France are apposite (Lowe and Bodiguel, 1990) and indicate the benefit of agricultural education accommodating wider social goals and values in its curricula.
- A general change across the informed community to focus on environmental management as the context for agriculture is based on a rising understanding that land degradation and other environmental factors are related to decreases in farm profitability. A more profitable agriculture is thus seen as an environmentally robust production system. In a profitable system, incentives which once supported high fertiliser use could be replaced with environmental taxes which fund activities designed to reduce eutrophication of waterways, for example. On the other hand, declining incomes from agriculture in marginal production areas may preclude the introduction of such measures as soil stabilisation and militate against sustainable production (Chisholm, 1992).

So if there is such a need for more knowledge about food production and processing and for sound environment management, how can this be reconciled with the trends described earlier?

## Relevance and Equity

The two outcomes need not be in conflict, for the following three reasons. First, declining interest in studying agriculture at university level relates to current and past courses and outmoded perceptions of the farming sector in the Australian community. Second, courses may not be what is now required, or favour access by potential students. Third, agricultural science is not the only form of higher agricultural education. Resolution of apparently conflicting views requires a definitional framework that in this case is time and beneficiary related; this means the future industry, future students, and forward-looking government.

In addition to science and technology, future agricultural education may be separated into the four possible types of education viz:

- agribusiness – which is oriented to: banks; fertiliser, chemical and machinery, companies: factory suppliers; business managers; cooperative managers etc.
- environment - which is oriented to conservation organisations in both government and non-government sectors; land care; national parks etc.
- food production, processing and safety - which includes; traditional agricultural, food science and food technology courses
- lifestyle - which increasingly applies where the urban-rural interface is no longer dominated by a production oriented agriculture and where a family's values, which in many cases might never have placed maximum income as the highest priority, are acknowledged.

For such a future, one might predict a reduction from the current 23 universities providing agricultural education in Australia to say, six major providers which integrate environmental management, food science, agribusiness, and food production with an understanding of social requirements. There may be less students and a higher minimum entry level for these courses which focus on understanding knowledge and its generation, integration with other disciplines, and the cross fertilisation which can occur in critical groupings for research training. Some of these faculties may relocate their principal site to an accessible regional location which groups major agricultural, agribusiness, and environmental interests. Vocationally oriented degree courses may assume a greater numerical importance at undergraduate level and would be likely to have a regional and practical base.

## Others' Views

It is easy to present such views from a position of effecting change within a leading university. But as one may be like Berkeley's Philonous in fact influencing one's own observation, and who knows even creating the object one is discussing, these conclusions should be checked against those of others.

The most comprehensive review of agricultural and related education in Australia (McColl, 1991) recommended the creation of *Recognised Providers* in major agricultural, forestry or horticultural areas which:

1. Offer courses in at least three of the eight major categories of study; agriculture, horticulture, forestry, natural resource management, agricultural economics, agricultural commerce, agricultural engineering, and food science and technology.
2. Have a minimum student load of 450 EFTSUs.
3. Provide courses from Associate Diploma to higher Doctorates as well as providing TAFE courses or having effective credit transfer or articulation arrangements between TAFE and higher education.
4. Are part of a large institution with strengths in supporting faculties.
5. Allow sharing of expensive equipment and facilities.

### ***Education - not Just Training***

Columella's *Res Rustica* totalling 12 volumes is the most comprehensive and systematic Roman treatise on agriculture; it was he who introduced the view, for example that soils unlike people do not become worn out with age and overproduction. I am unsure how often, if at all, Columella is mentioned in agricultural courses; if he is mentioned it is likely to be with greater frequency in the integrated science courses than the vocationally oriented courses. His view on soils may sound to a student absorbing techniques and methods of fertiliser usage – it isn't necessarily. What can be naive is assumptions of technology-based courses that teach fertiliser application without understanding its chemical interactions in the environment beyond simple income and yield benefits. Similarly, it is naive to dismiss the limitations of organic fertiliser, and the founding of agricultural schools on the back of German soil chemists.

I find these consistent with the preceding assertions in terms of the elements of size, multiple layers of education and training, links to other faculties, and breadth across the production, processing and marketing continuum, within an environmental context.

Meyer (1992) as Chancellor Emeritus of the University of California at Davis, a leading agricultural education centre, has become the USA's philosopher of agricultural education. He introduces his conclusions by quoting Keynes ... *the difficulty lies not in new ideas, but in escaping from old ones*. The old, still present, ideas of agricultural education to which he refers include such factors as a production bias, inadequate accommodation of social factors - particularly those of the non-agricultural community, and the still cursory consideration of environmental matters. His extensive writings (for example, Meyer, 1992; 1995) similarly support the view elaborated herein.

Other studies in the USA (for example, NRC, 1996; Kellogg Foundation, 1994; Dillman et al, 1995; CAST, 1996; NASULGC, 1996; RMF, 1995; NCAE, 1997) indicate that stakeholder involvement is of rising importance and can create conflicting demands on agricultural education when services beyond the sector are required. They also suggest that the rural context of agriculture requires different approaches to that of other university faculties, and that overall there may be more sites than can be sustained in the long term, and insufficient modern infrastructure or resources to maintain hundreds of locations.



Thus the answer to the question **Are Faculties of Agriculture Still Necessary?** is **Yes**. However, they must take on a different form to that of today and the past, lest they be deemed irrelevant (Maguire, 1997). Determining that new form will require; strategic planning activities, reassessment of current and future educational support requirements in terms of physical assets, and understanding the original principles of the science and technology integration of the great European agricultural institutions, and the land grant college system of the United States. The critical ingredient of success in that last case has long ceased to be the land grant itself, rather it is the integration of research, education and extension (Falvey and Forno, 1997).

Our history in agricultural education in Australia takes us from the era of agricultural colleges as training schools in the 1880s following British, then US leads, through the creation of university faculties of agriculture in competition with colleges to today's global system. We can continue to learn from recent and past developments in the USA and elsewhere in terms of joint investment with State Government Departments of Agriculture, and reorientation of universities around new objectives and challenges.

Such deliberation could lead to a range of institutions for agricultural education such as:

- Large comprehensive institutions - with an international focus for some basic and strategic education and research and application to national and regional problems, a funding base including industry and a range of government agencies, providing research training in conjunction with external research bodies as a support for higher education, engaging in new learning techniques through multimedia, and having linkages to or delivering sub-degree vocational education and training.
- Regional universities with links to the first type of university and local industry with a focus on technology and management, particularly through multimedia-based distance education, supported by both higher and training sector funding.
- A total multimedia based institution, operating from Australia or elsewhere which may offer some generic courses related to agriculture and environmental management nationally and internationally and access other quality courses from similar institutions in other countries (Global Alliance, 1997).
- Cooperatively funded institutions run by industry which possibly accept some funds from government but largely focus on the demands of industry and cooperatives, accessing the other types of institutions as required and where effective.

These alternatives are not mutually exclusive, neither do they grow logically from the current scatter of institutions in Australia. To reach a point of say six comprehensive universities with large faculties relating to agriculture, with some regional institutions linked to these and industry, will require planning and coordination among agricultural educators. There is evidence that this is beginning on a State by State basis, although one could be forgiven for fearing that many decisions will be made by default in a period of major change in funding arrangements, and a near vacuum of concern within cities for the changes which are needed to lead agricultural education back to the position it once aspired to within Australia. Yes, faculties or something similar remain necessary, but one might thus ask, *if necessary, can the tradition survive?*

## Can the Tradition Survive?

The very diversification of agriculture in the socio-economics of the nation is demonstrated through its reliance on graduates from law, business, science, arts and other faculties. This lends credence to suggestions that faculty groupings are merely management control mechanisms based on historical separations which have become clouded in the federation process of the past decades in Australia, and past centuries of evolution in global university management. Thus a faculty as such may be an irrelevant arrangement. One could readily find advocates for maintenance of the construct as I found in a consultancy (Falvey and O'Brien, 1993) conducted for the University of Melbourne's old Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry prior to any consideration of personal involvement in the change process. The results from that survey of attitudes by industry to agricultural science at the University of Melbourne were enlightening.

*The preamble to the Terms of Reference for the consultancy suggested that ...The Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry delivers a course of recognised quality which appears to assist graduates to find employment to a greater extent than the average. It suffers from a low level of prestige among VCE graduates seeking entrance to university and as a consequence, or perhaps independently, from a low level of prestige within the university's management. Such concerns have previously been addressed by improvements in the content of the undergraduate course and through maintenance of excellence in postgraduate courses. This approach has been successful in part although perceptions outside the faculty and the industry do not appear to have shifted to any great extent. Differing opinions within the university are not currently being integrated successfully to the benefit of the faculty or the university as a whole. These opinions appear to lead to such options for the future of the faculty as: (i) continuing in the current manner and produce acceptable graduates for industry and post graduates of excellence; (ii) promoting the image of the course among VCE students; (iii) focussing on the delivery of a greater range of postgraduate programs and progressively withdrawing from the undergraduate degree while assisting the VCAH to meet all needs at this level; (iv) dispersing the faculty according to the disciplines of staff and exiting from the provision of an agricultural degree; (v) integrating with other faculties including science and commerce with the faculty of agriculture withdrawing from teaching some undergraduate years, probably first year; Other options no doubt can be put forward.*

The 700-year history of universities with its 400 years of specific agricultural education suggest that little changes quickly. Thus these options may well remain those available at present, and are worthy of review when some personal opinions are introduced in the final chapter of this thesis.

The general findings of the consultancy were:

- general support for the course qualified by a perception that it needs to evolve to meet changing industry needs;
- greater involvement with industry is necessary to improve graduate acceptability in the agricultural employment market;

- a poorly-developed understanding of the course and the faculty among client industries and potential students.

These findings indicated the need for faculty involvement with industry, particularly private sector businesses in processing and marketing as well as production, as well as industry involvement with the faculty backed by resources to promote the course to industry and future students. The consultancy highlighted such changes as:

**Shift in client base:** The client base for the faculty had been shifting in recent years and changes in the course itself may not have been sufficient to accommodate those shifts. The increase in range and number of courses in agriculture and related natural resource allowed greater selection of courses to better match career aspirations of students, and preferences of employers. There were emerging opportunities for agricultural graduates arising from the general trend for private sector firms to replace unqualified field staff with graduates, from new jobs being created as a result of deregulation in agriculture, and the increasing sophistication of on-farm and off-farm local and international businesses accompanying the rapid advances in telecommunications and information technology. Other potential career areas included environmental and natural resource management.

**Course not well-known by prospective students:** The Bachelor of Agriculture Science course was not generally well-known among careers' teachers or their students in secondary schools.

**Mixed view of career prospects by employers:** Views of some employers in agriculture, and of those in farmer organisations on the career opportunities for agricultural graduates ranged from jobs being limited with poor remuneration, to open-ended career prospects.

**Commercial skills needed:** There was a clear message from employers that graduates must to be able to recognise and operate according to commercial imperatives. Forging closer links with industry was recommended to achieve this, through allowing faculty staff to become more familiar with industry issues and the industry operating environment, and through establishing mechanisms for direct contact by students with industry and employers during the course.

**Coordinate education, research and information:** It was seen as appropriate to orient the course and its delivery to the agricultural industries of south-eastern Australia. The interest of industry (defined as the input-suppliers (to producers), producers, processors and marketers) in the course and the discussion surrounding it indicates potential for considering some of the suggestions arising from the interviews, particularly that of coordinating with Department of Agriculture, CSIRO and industry in the formation of an agricultural knowledge centre.

Specifically, the review recommended:

- the scientific orientation of the course be retained, that the faculty work with industry to develop mechanisms to ensure students are trained to apply knowledge in a commercial context, and are made aware of commercial principles during the course.
- interaction with the private sector involved in all aspects of agriculture be actively encouraged through academics participating in industry, industry representation on the faculty advisory groups, and other innovations being tested at other universities.
- the faculty, with the support of the university administration, engage in discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, CSIRO, private sector representatives and other suppliers of agricultural education, research and extension services with the intent of determining a basis for coordinating resources.
- the course content be included in some promotional information to industry and secondary schools, that there be a level of industry involvement in course delivery, and that, if not already agreed, consideration be given to the incorporation of a high-quality context-setting course on agriculture in first year.
- a coordinated publicity campaign be developed and managed by or for the faculty targeting industry and potential students. (The consultants were made aware of a general image raising undertaking for the university as a whole managed by a major advertising house in Melbourne; the faculty should maximise its use of this service.)
- courses be designed to allow development of skills in communication, interpersonal skills and teamwork, that students be required to apply knowledge in industry-specific contexts, and that students have the opportunity to liaise directly with industry during the course through projects, work placements and other means.
- publicity information should constructively differentiate the degrees available in agriculture as a basis for increasing understanding of the probable differences in the capability of graduates of different courses.

Some seven years later, these recommendations seem obvious and yet inadequate. Industry support for its *own* faculty funded by government does not constitute considered support. Those leaders in industry who form part of the 20 percent of farmers who earn nearly 100 percent of real profit acknowledge that they source information and education from the best available around the world. They also note the limited role of government, the need for management of the natural environment and that, of education in these fields, ... *'we do not mind how it is managed as long as it is of a high and reliable quality'*.

Was this the case in the 1990s? Unfortunately not. Faculties of agriculture demonstrated variable and declining quality pervaded by attempts to offer a 'one-stop shop', thereby downgrading the relevance of other faculties. Even in universities, logic prevails in the long run, and one might therefore expect either action to:

- integrate a faculty related to agriculture with the wider university (not simply science as this could accelerate decline through separation from courses with legal, commercial, sociological, and broad ecological issues) while retaining a coordinating role by accessing relevant courses and stimulating their modification to suit the sector, or,
- create a large faculty which can realistically expect to cover production, processing, and marketing aspects within a context of natural resource management, which is confident enough to draw expertise from other faculties into serving the sector.

The second approach was initiated by the University of Melbourne through what became known as the Institute of Land and Food Resources. If it is ever seen to have not worked, the other option, and others, remain available to provide a higher level of service to the progressive agricultural sector of the future. To implement the second option, consolidation of several small institutions through merger, focussing on the future needs of the sector for staffing and management decisions, and compensating for decades of slow progress were required. Chapter 3 amplifies the approach taken by the University of Melbourne, which was one reason why I accepted the challenge to initiate the process. A convenient means of providing a focus for change was to stimulate thought beyond the Australian experience, in this case through re-consideration of the USA system, which was the rhetorical model chosen through the early 1990s by the university and the faculty, and which I therefore followed for the first phase of the merger with VCAH.

### **Adapting the USA Land Grant College Concept to Australia**

In accepting the challenge to create an integrated agricultural research, education and outreach system, a new Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture came into effect on April 3, 1995 with an written intention to include elements of the Land Grant Colleges (LGCs) of the USA in its approach and operations. As the largest such faculty, with statewide coverage and links with extension and vocational education, Falvey and Bardsley (1995) boldly suggested that ... *a new era in agricultural education may begin*.

Elsewhere changes were also being acted on or discussed. Anderson (1994) identified societal changes requiring a reform of agricultural courses in New Zealand while the small and competitive nature of Australian universities involved in agriculture were noted in a NSW study (Derera et al, 1994). Recent developments in Victoria following the recent years of deliberations had created an opportunity to implement recommendations of various investigators through a unified, multilevel and client oriented agricultural education service.

The new Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture was created to find a means of merging of the activities of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (the College) with the those of the previous Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry of the University. This provided for the largest faculty in Australasia concerned with agriculture, forestry, and related education, and one with nine campuses, eight of which were wholly dedicated to agriculture, forestry and related education and research. Provision of diverse and integrated courses at vocational and higher education levels was a unique feature and formed a critical component of educational outreach in common with the applied orientation of the LGC system. The diverse resources, which were legally separate until merger was agreed and then legislated by parliament and ratified by the university were coordinated through management and staff goodwill.

## Resources and Courses

Staff: A total of 472 staff, 207 academic and 265 general staff, were located across the nine campuses.

### Students and Courses:

Higher Education: Student numbers, in *effective full-time student units*, in higher education courses were around 1,300 in the following courses:

- Diploma and Advanced Diploma
- Bachelor Degree in Agricultural Science, Forest Science, Applied Science (Agriculture, Dairy Technology or Horticulture)
- Graduate Diploma
- Graduate Certificate
- Master's Degree in Agricultural Science, Forest Science, Horticultural Science, Wood Science and Applied Science (Agriculture, Horticulture or Dairy Technology)
- PhD

The four-year B.Agr.Sc. course and the three or three-and-a-half year B.Appl.Sc. courses were offered in parallel; industry interest in the latter course was the greater. Graduate employment from college courses were also among the highest for agriculture courses in Australia, a factor attributed to its flexibility and compulsory industry placement.

Vocational Education: Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses extending from short courses to Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Associate Diplomas, which were linked to higher education courses, involved some 10,000 students annually.

Facilities: The facilities of the Faculty were extensive especially by Australian standards and included; laboratories at the major research locations of Parkville, Werribee and Creswick, large farms at Dookie, Longerenong and Glenormiston, amenity horticulture resources and a botanic garden at Burnley, a pilot milk processing plant at Gilbert Chandler and distance learning facilities at McMillan.

Finance: Including the allocations to all College activities and research grants, annual financial resources totalled some \$33 million in 1995.

Campuses: Activities of the Faculty were spread across nine campuses four of which had a specific eco-regional focus. Campuses of the Faculty were:

Campus	Location	Education Areas
Parkville	University of Melbourne main campus	Agricultural Science; Forestry; Natural Resources
Werribee/Mt. Derrimut	peri-urban Melbourne	Animal & Plant Science - research
Creswick	near Ballarat (rural)	Forests and Timber
Dookie	near Shepparton (rural)	Farm Management; Production Horticulture; Irrigated Dairy
Gilbert Chandler	Werribee (peri-urban Melbourne)	Milk Processing

Burnley	Suburban Melbourne	Amenity Horticulture
Glenormiston	near Camperdown (rural)	Farm Management; Wool; Dairy; Horse Management
Longerenong	near Horsham (rural)	Farm Management; Dryland Crops; Grazing; Agribusiness
McMillan	Warragul (rural) + Sale + Leongatha	Farm Management; Dairy

## Using the LGC Concept

Elements from the LGC system instructive for Australia included:

- a strong practical orientation to agriculture through industry involvement;
- the linking of research, education and extension as a continuum;
- inclusion of processing and marketing as an integral part of agriculture;
- bringing together producers and processors with scientists;
- specific, as distinct from generic, university management systems
- involvement both pre- and post-farmgate
- providing services at the level required by clients.

The range of human and physical resources available to the new Faculty provided opportunities to develop cooperative research projects and innovative education. However, the first priority was to re-orient its culture by further developing links with various subsectors of agriculture. The two key elements selected for immediate implementation in the new Faculty were: client interaction and outreach/extension

## Client Orientation

The creation of the new Faculty itself was seen as a response to client criticism of fragmentation and inflexibility.

According to Agriculture Victoria (1993), Victoria's gross value of production and export as a proportion of the total for Australia for milk was 55% and 85% respectively and for other major industries was; fruit and vegetable 26% and 46%, wool and textiles 18% and 25%, meat 16-21%, grains 13%. These industries provided the basis for development of centres of national and international significance.

To ensure initial and continued client involvement with the new faculty, I instigated a 12-month planning process to develop a common vision of needs in five and ten years, define logical changes toward the common vision, and institute a procedure for periodic planning which involves both clients and suppliers of services. Secondary objectives of the process were to enhance client knowledge of faculty capabilities and to promote integration of staff in the new faculty.

A further mechanism to ensure closer links between clients and the faculty was the establishment of industry groupings across the Faculty. All 207 academic staff nominated the industry they primarily served and the disciplines with which they are mainly associated. From these, industry and disciplinary based groups were formed and the major industry groups met with industry representatives on a regular basis. These groups formed

the basis of modifications to courses, research and outreach activities. A related activity was the initiation of industry fora where industry representatives conducted regular discussions with staff and students, particularly at the Parkville campus. Linking with clients was to be accomplished through, what was termed, outreach.

## **Reaching Out**

In outreach, the colleges brought non-credit courses and other informal mechanisms that foresaw the day when individuals would largely self-access information. Outreach education was perceived by some academic staff as being less useful than face-to-face teaching and research despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that outreach audiences enjoyed a greater choice of learning experiences, which placed greater demands on the educator. Outreach was seen by many to be a responsibility of Agriculture Victoria (the state Department of Agriculture's name at the time) and others through their extension activities, but the VCAH history with the department was confused on this as on many other points. The Faculty was to link with that extension service and participate in a unified outreach service.

Outreach activities assumed a breaking down of barriers between award and non-award courses and positive impact of articulation between courses. As *development* was added to *research* to emphasise an industry concern about the relevance of institutional research, so *outreach* is to be included with *education* functions to further meet the needs of clients. This all was squeezed into the LGC concept as a means of intra-faculty communication. But as Falvey and Bardsley (1995) observed *the new faculty is an innovation ... it is not the final or only model and is suited better to Victoria as a function of its recent history, relatively dense agriculture and population and its atmosphere of reform. We must expect further and radical changes in agricultural knowledge system management in Australia throughout this decade.* Deep suspicion that had been exacerbated by earlier confrontations between the university and colleges was put aside by this joint planning and integrated departmental structure in order to advance the new vision. Within a year of initiating the process, the environment within the university itself has also shifted to favour a corporate approach of planning and change with appointment of a new Vice Chancellor – or so it seemed.

## **The University of Melbourne Environment**

Prior to 1995, the University of Melbourne had been faced with difficult decisions concerning its Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry. At various times it had considered whether the fields were worth retaining in terms of whether the agricultural science degree should be changed to a three-year degree, or even wound up. Some of these matters were anecdotal although glimpses of these feelings can be captured from minutes of the Academic Board and the correspondence of the longer-serving staff of the old Faculty. Notwithstanding these concerns through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the University had signed an affiliation agreement with the College to determine a basis for moving towards full merger.



To effect the merger, the University constituted a new Faculty effective upon appointment of a new Dean in March 1995. A new and external Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Gilbert, was appointed in 1996 bringing a more corporate approach to management and administration as indicated in the document *Building on Quality: Proposals for the Modification of Committee Structures, Planning Processes and Reporting Procedure* (Gilbert, 1996). As the strategic plan for the university, the document introduced the need to ensure the highest quality staff, research, activities, teaching and learning approaches, and national and international positioning. These points were amplified by the addition of quality management in the final form of the document that appeared under the title *Earning Esteem* (Gilbert, 1997) which became the University of Melbourne's Strategic Plan for 1997 to 2000. As an operational document moving towards that revised strategic plan, *Building on Quality* included the objective of improving the regulatory and management structures and the functioning of the university, and premised much of its approach on the need for a diverse national system in higher education in contradistinction to past Federal policies.

The plans of the university provided support to the strategy of what became the operational name of the Faculty, the Institute of Land and Food Resources, causing it to surprise critics who revelled in mantras about intransigence in the University. The global nature and broad span of agriculture as a subset of natural resource management in a new era of electronic multimedia provided a context that gained some although perhaps insufficient credence in the emerging faculty, is outlined in the following Chapter.

## **Chapter 2**

### **An Appropriate Context? Global Food, Environmental, and Learning Needs**

An antipodean component of agricultural education service based on international leadership in a small number of fields critical to continued excellence in agricultural production, processing and marketing for major local industries was the ideal aimed for in merging the entities of the six agricultural-style colleges and the Faculty with its two departments. The ideal seemed a viable target because the combined entity would have more resources than any of its domestic competitors, was part of a leading compressive university, dominated service provision in the most agriculturally significant part of Australia, and had apparently committed itself to such far reaching changes. The global environment in which these changes were to be considered was using electronic technologies to share leading courses and research efforts, re-conceiving agriculture as an environmental manipulation, and acknowledging the need to conduct high quality activities in less developed countries. Many staff in the merging entities had not contemplated this option as seriously as seeking a competitive advantage over other domestic providers. Nevertheless, the opportunity was real and with it the responsibility clear, I thought. Such matters were therefore factors in the background research that accompanied planning the new faculty.

Agricultural and related education has usually taken a production orientation. This appears reasonable in an historical sense as the societal views of past times supported such a conception of its role. Even today, the precarious nature of sustained global food security highlights the overriding need to determine means of further increasing output. However, the views of the urban societies in nations that control the majority of the world's wealth, and hence impact on education among all other aspects of global life, have promoted an emphasis on environmental issues, sometimes above food production.

Agricultural scientists have always needed to understand the context of the natural environment that they seek to manipulate. Yet many who assume that the title of a degree confers this understanding may have mistaken technological for scientific knowledge.

#### **Natural Resource Management**

A natural resource management context for agricultural education required revisions of curricula, staff profiles, and integration with other university faculties. Additionally, the global shift in agricultural extension and education communication technologies meant that its link to rural social services would soon come under threat. Communication technological developments provided the bridge to reunite extension to education where they are supported by reasonable access to basic education. Affecting all education, communication technology was already in the 1990s of special relevance to agriculture with its rural and distance associations. Likewise, it allowed a new approach to international access and delivery of education and information services. This global approach is amplified in a popular (in this narrow field) book (Falvey, 1996) that fed a

widespread craving for renewal in the sector; references to assertions in the following summary can be found in that book.

### ***Food for Thought***

The observations of academics by Cornford (1908) satirise academic learning as ‘sound’ when no one has ever heard of the esoteric subject in which one is learned, and the ‘sound scholar’ as term of praise used among learned men for one who has ‘no reputation outside the university and a rather queer one inside it’. He concludes in offering the counsel that the academic should not write a book - but if one succumbs to the temptation, then the book should be unreadable, otherwise one would be called brilliant and forfeit all internal respect. My book *Food Environment Education: Agricultural Education in Natural Resource Management* was not brilliant, although it attracted wide attention to the Faculty and the University as a source of thought on agricultural education in a period when such faculties in much of the world were undergoing difficulties and contemplating the need to change. It served to indicate the context and path of change for the faculty.

The apparent declining emphasis on agricultural education indicated the need for change. It also implied that the increasing separation of urban populations from food production has partly fuelled interest in greater environmental care, and that agricultural education should embrace this public viewpoint in order to command respect and funding. The benefits which accrue from education for this argument were assumed on the basis of investigations in less developed countries that indicated that GDP growth is higher where education was emphasised, even where significant policy distortions dampened that growth.

Agricultural education in both more and less developed countries in the 1990s was under duress from apparent reduced demand and fiscal pressure. In less developed countries this related to the profile of students gaining access to universities - mainly from urban areas and privileged backgrounds, and to the policies of the countries that emphasised investment in new industries. In more developed countries this may have been related to a continuing reduction in the numbers of persons engaged in modern agriculture with its high levels of automation and hence the partial loss of past political influence, and to public and student perceptions that agriculture was a mature industry that no longer offered potential growth for career opportunities. Agriculture also began to suffer from an image of damaging the environment.

Criticisms of the environmental impact of modern food production had and have merit in many cases. However, there was and is a need for a wider public understanding of the compromises that necessarily must occur in order to produce sufficient food at current levels of knowledge. Projections of future food demand at the time indicated that present technologies are insufficient to produce global food requirements without environmental degradation. The challenges and opportunities for food production education, research and development contrasted with common perceptions.

The term *natural resource management* was used to emphasise that the majority of the world's terrestrial resources are managed by farmers, foresters, and those in industries and services that support them. For the foreseeable future at that time, the objectives of this management were to increase food and fibre production efficiency in a manner that was equitable for all producers including the poor, and which minimised impact on the natural resource base.

Within universities, agricultural education thus faced a choice of becoming a variable output from science or skills oriented courses with less understanding of the interactions between science, people and the environment, or of shifting its own orientation to embrace public requirements and emerging technologies. Individual institutions and nations were seen as each determining their own response, if they indeed recognised the choice. The great agricultural education centres of the world were seen to most probably be those which were able to offer their services within areas of specialisation on an international basis, and which created a learning environment that encouraged motivated students to understand agriculture as the management of risks within the environment – the management of natural resources.

The shifts from teaching to creating a learning experience, and of conceiving agriculture as a component of natural resource management, set the context for changes in the Institute of Land and Food Resources.

### **Learning Natural Resource Principles**

The history of agricultural education (Falvey, 1997) contains progressive changes in teaching and extension. In many ways, these reflect the general changes that have occurred in higher education in more developed countries over the past 200 years. In the USA at the turn of this century less than one percent of the population attended college – something slightly over 200,000 students. By the end of the Second World War, the number of undergraduates had risen to 1.4 million and in 1994 exceeded 13 million. In catering for such change, institutions have necessarily modified their approaches to teaching.

Initially agricultural education focused on the preparation of leaders and technicians. In both cases residency was a requirement to enculture students with the values of the social establishment. This approach effectively determined curricula and modes of delivery with new technologies for delivery being absorbed to further the enculturation process. Increasing numbers of students necessarily led to teaching being based on a lecture system as a simple expediency to allow the experience and knowledge of lecturers to be shared with the greatest possible numbers of students. This approach in agricultural and other education remains the common focus of educational institutions today, as a reflection of a social imperative rather than a time-proven system in the assistance of learning.

### **Learning**

Differing opinions are easily elicited within institutions about the knowledge that individual students must learn. In an environment of rapidly expanding knowledge and a

quantum of knowledge in every subject area that exceeds the teaching time available, it has become unrealistic to cling to traditional views of content, and possibly even the expected outcomes of undergraduate study. The view that an undergraduate education provides a sound understanding of a body of knowledge, or even an adequate preparation for a career, may be outmoded. Some employers have long recognised that the essence of a graduate is not one who knows all in any discipline but one who has acquired essential skills including communication, analytical thinking, conceptual ability and reasoning, combined with sufficient knowledge to access information as required.

Large employers of agricultural graduates, such as banks engaged in lending to agriculture, have recognised that the best graduates that they can engage are those who have a distinct capacity to continue to learn. They recognise the continuing role of education in the lives of professionals and do not expect that an individual can have mastered the content of any discipline in a three or four-year undergraduate program. Such an approach has become similar across the professions. Courses designed on the assumption of producing a graduate who has mastered the knowledge of a field have long required shifts in curricula and teaching in order to meet the needs of a changed environment for graduates. Changes that have occurred throughout society have been slow to translate beyond, simple applications, to teaching.

At the same time as technology changing, the profile of students engaging in formal education in Western countries has also changed significantly. The traditional view of an undergraduate of a young adult engaged in full-time education was estimated to constitute less than one half of students engaging in higher education in more developed countries by the 1990s. Mature students, who often engage in part time education, created new demands on educational institutions, especially in agriculture. This is a consequence of better informed purchasers of educational services deriving from the wider life-experience of mature students. The service function of education is reinforced by the views of such students who demand delivery in educational and personal terms as distinct from traditional indicators more easily demonstrated by prestigious institutions, such as staff qualifications, class size, research grants, and student recreational facilities. The traditional lecture-based approach to teaching may no longer, under this circumstance provide the most appropriate learning environment. This is a major market shift, from a supply-driven (technology-push) approach of teaching students about science and the role of technology, to one of learning-pull in which students exercise demand choices.

## **How We Learn**

Understanding more about the process of learning allows the creation of learning environments that suit individual requirements and which can accommodate the increasingly diverse learning styles of students. The emerging frustration about students who fail to realise their full potential in traditional lecture-based systems may be one indication of the differing learning styles of individual students. Traditional lecture-based systems have been strongly oriented to verbal and mathematical logic, not the least in agricultural education. Those persons who learn more efficiently in environments where knowledge is presented in spatial or personal terms may be under-served by such

traditional agricultural education; students who comprehend field explanations of concepts much faster than they do lecture-based explanation have always formed a significant cohort within agricultural education.

### **The Employment Environment**

The timing of education is also in flux. Global economic changes have removed the concept of whole-of-life employment and introduced the concept of an individual graduate's employability and flexibility to move to new careers. Academics are now conditioned to believe that new graduates should expect to change employers in a career, yet they have not all taken the step of realising that this implies changes in careers in addition to changes in employer, or self-employment. The rise in continuing education and retraining which arises from this realisation has yet to be recognised by most agriculture and natural resource management education providers. One might postulate shifts in career for a graduate from farm advisory services, to private consulting, to agribusiness advice, to on-farm environmental management, to national park management – diverse career changes that are all conceivable within the changing employment environment. Whole-of-life learning has been a necessity for serious professionals in natural resource management since before the 1990s.

The challenge has been for educational institutions to prepare students for whole-of-life learning and to instil an appropriate ethic to engage in such learning. Those institutions that recognised the need to instil and service such an ethic understand the implications this has in terms of teaching and creation of appropriate learning environments. Yet the composition of skills represented in most teaching faculties remains one of the major management challenges facing such institutions and in effect, can create an inertia against rapid change in the creation of new learning environments.

The changing demand for education has been reflected in the market place since the 1980s in Australia. Traditional educational institutions lost their monopoly claim on accredited learning conducted on their own campuses. Accreditation, often by organisations separate from teaching institutions such as professional bodies, applies to workplace learning, home study, and a variety of other technology-based systems – especially in the USA which set trends for Australia in this field. Distance education has extended the classroom beyond traditional boundaries to the globe. The university cannot be viewed solely as a physical location; if the physical location has importance, it may as a venue for short intensive and socially oriented adjuncts to learning. The learning environment spans that of the students and the information imparted by those responsible for managing the learning environment – it includes the computer link to remote homes and offices, and discussion groups; many student may simply conceive the main campus as an administrative location.

### **Changes in the System**

The traditional system of agricultural education has been changing for decades. Fuelled by a declining role of agricultural industries in most economies and the minds of decision-makers in most of the more-developed countries, agricultural education experienced a

decline in popularity. The role of information technology has been critical to such changes and provided a mechanism to catalyse the shift between agricultural education as it has been traditionally conceived towards an integrated natural resource management appreciation within commercial interests.

Prior to the 1990s, while distance education was offered initially through the form of correspondence study, it could not be considered to have been the major form of learning. This situation changed with technology allowing instruction to be offered in any place at any time, and to persons from a range of backgrounds. In general terms, knowledge about the way in which students learn in this new information environment allowed planning for future mechanisms to service the needs of natural resource management education from the 1980s. However, traditional modes of delivery remained the norm.

Systems based mainly on students attending university on a daily basis and on teaching to impart understanding a body of prescribed knowledge may once have been the best basis for preparation for life and career. But simply imparting of knowledge updated through research via lectures has been limiting student learning opportunities. The challenge to individual lecturers is significant, and one which requires support in the period of adjustment, and in the schooling of new lecturers to accommodate new technologies and approaches to learning.

### **The Student's Dilemma**

Frustration with the rigidity of university systems that fail to acknowledge the benefits and reality of engaging in education and work experience simultaneously, and inefficiencies in the use of time across and the year have been mounting through the 1990s. Added to these frustrations are those of routine university life, such as one hour classes scattered randomly through the week, difficulties in car parking, lecturers who cannot always be at the cutting edge of their fields, and entry criteria disallow prior knowledge and experience.

Teaching-based instruction has not suited to the preferred learning modes of individual students; it may also be possible that the preferred learning approach of an individual varies across a lifetime. Certainly a generation growing up with electronic information and linked to entertainment, has created demands which traditional universities have not meet.

Many learners in 1990s already preferred self-paced, interactive electronic learning activities based on well-designed electronically delivered courses. Design of these courses on a modular basis facilitates learning, structuring of courses, and access by persons taking other courses. Modules also provide a basis for continuing-learning programs. The learner has choice of access to a range of learning resources chosen to suit preferred learning modes and circumstances. The role of academic staff needed to shift from teaching to one of planning a learning environment, convening activities, and tutoring. While this may imply a reduced role to some, it emphasises the critical importance of well-informed researchers and mentors to facilitate learning processes. In many ways it represents a return to the historical role of professors in universities.

Students gained power as customers in the 1980s and since then have influencing the future of universities. Such a future for universities around the world may be indicated by the early electronic offering of the Harvard MBA. The quality association of the name coupled with electronic access then led to individual institutions offering fields in which they excelled in conjunction with other institutions with compatible or related offerings.

Collaborative team web-based activities began addressing the old chestnut of widening higher education in the 1990s. Having learned of the approach in the US, I promoted the Institute of Land and Food Resources being the first foreign university to join A\*DEC (1999), an electronic consortium of land grant colleges in the USA, and collaborating with a Cornell University based electronic delivery group. The Global Subject expanded to key universities in other time zones and was successful – although under pressure from bizarre University rules that assumed all students were physically at Melbourne. While practical experience in laboratories and field situations continued as a component of intensive sessions requiring physical presence, some skills-based activities could be prepared for electronically – for example, virtual surgery on domestic animals was being used to teach anatomy and surgical skills and to introduce moral issues prior to students practicing on real animals.

### **The Academic Administrator's Dilemma**

Management of agricultural and natural resource management education in the 1990s offered new challenges with constant real reductions in finances, which tended to orient management to cost-cutting and borrowing funds from the future. Such borrowing occurred in the form of reduced investment in equipment and maintenance indicated by an increase in the proportion of budget allocated to teaching staff salaries.

Requirements for practical instruction, teamwork, laboratory learning and so forth were commonly claimed as a reason for rejecting distance education as a mode of natural resource management education. Such reasons could be challenged as the technology of distance education and the needs of students changed. With greater numbers of persons gaining access to tertiary institutions, the content, quality and outcomes from undergraduate degrees needed to be reconsidered. Undergraduate degrees were becoming general education for a larger proportion of communities, with postgraduate qualifications becoming a focus for persons gaining mastery over a body of knowledge and specialising.

Practical training and some laboratory activities could be linked more closely to industry. The inclusion of compulsory practical experience in industry as a component of some agricultural undergraduate qualifications has long demonstrated benefits to each of students, employers, and academics – but it was mainly farm-based and without consideration of what was a serious farmer. In management terms, the implications was that identification of the core activities of education might free universities from maintaining physical assets not required for direct instruction, and face-to-face teaching not being the dominant methodology. When the essence of education is to provide a learning environment and the knowledge and skills consistent with a field of learning, timetabling of staff teaching focuses around those times when students attend intensive



courses at the main institution – with staff time being otherwise flexibly involved in research, graduate supervision, and assessment activities.

Adjusting to external change was generally considered sufficient in lieu of leading technological innovation; but the benefits to agricultural education suggest that it should have been, in its own jargon, one of the early adopters. Some of the changes that were expected in the new Faculty are summarised in Table 2.1. How realistic were these notions? The emergence of an international agricultural and natural resource education system using electronic technologies to create the virtual university during the 1990s suggests they were realistic. In such an environment, I considered that the logical response was to create a preferred future through informed planning.

**Table 2.1 Past, Present and Future Characteristics of Higher Education**

<b>Past</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Future</b>
Lecture-based	New technology supporting lecture-based learning	Lectures electronic communication supported by residential schools
Full rounded courses	Employer demands set skills of graduates - for example, ability to learn	Provision of continuing learning service
Whole-of-life career	Career changes	Need for retraining and continuing learning
University managed accreditation	Professional body accreditation in some fields	Independent accreditation
Correspondence learning for disadvantaged	Distance education available as second-class alternative	Distance education main delivery mode - institutional Business Plans
Agricultural extension separated from education	Cost squeezes in both areas	Integration of education and extension in distance education
Lecturer culture determines learning environment	Increased student influence in teaching assessment	Range of learning environments available to suit profiles of students
Reasonably well-funded	Reduced public investment	Improved efficiencies of delivery
Timetable based on lectures	Timetable based on lectures	Timetable based around residential schools of distance education students
Low utility of capital resources	Low utility of capital resources	Increased efficiency through scheduling for intensive sessions for more students
Bachelor degree a rounded degree	Bachelors an introductory degree	Higher degrees for rounding and depth
School leavers as students	Increasing proportion of mature-aged students	Students of all ages engaged in continuous and basic learning

### **Creating The Future**

A global context has long been essential to serious providers in the sector, despite their responsibility to service their domestic and regional needs. However, the global issues are more than a simple sum of all countries' domestic needs. The rising gap in food production and consumption of the time (Pinstrup-Andersen and Pandya-Lorch, 1994) produced projections that the wealthy would accelerate their wellbeing above the poor, even without intending to do so. In any event, I felt that political pressure if not humanitarian emotions would insist on aid, joint agricultural research, shared international education programs in agriculture, and development finance for less developed countries. Reproducing the positive outcomes of agricultural scientists' greatest achievement, the Green Revolution,

required a substantial incremental investment in agricultural education and research across the globe together with the sharing of expertise, some 80 per cent of which existed in the more developed countries in the 1990s. The responsible response was to minimise negative impacts on the environment while maintaining essential human values, such as the right to eat; to me this widened the area of responsibility for educators in all related fields.

The argument, presented in the book referred to earlier (Falvey, 1996), traced the problems of natural resource management, the imperatives of agricultural production associated with rising human population and poverty, and the need for attitudinal shifts to the environment among the community and educators. These are summarised in Table 2.2 derived from the book to indicate the flow of thought that leads to a broader vision for a faculty than had ever been before been possible in Australia. I saw agricultural education as a logical precursor to, and major component of, future natural resource management education, or if you like integrated agricultural science. This choice was based on the observation that agriculture, and its related fields of forestry and national park management, comprised the majority of terrestrial managers. Trends in the field included:

- decreasing interest in agricultural and related education compared to other fields
- increasing appreciation of natural resource management approaches to the environment
- increasing demand for food from intensive production, environmental and social science
- increasing interest in protecting the environment

**Table 2.2 Integrating the Themes of *Food Environment Education* (Falvey, 1996)**

Chapter and Theme	Issue
<b>Chapter 1</b> Agriculture and Environment	Agriculture seen as unnecessarily harsh on natural resources and scientists seem unconcerned
<b>Chapter 2</b> Population and Food	World population growth requires more food production from current systems
<b>Chapter 3</b> Empathy and Under-standing	Balance between science and humanities in natural resource management is poor
<b>Chapter 4</b> Higher Education in LDCs	Concerns about access, quality, and relevance of agricultural education and of investment in buildings
<b>Chapter 5</b> Vocational Education in LDCs	Technological orientation is divorced from understanding of natural resource principles and industry ownership
<b>Chapter 6</b> Education in MDCs	Declining popularity of agriculture and separation from public opinion about the environment
<b>Chapter 7</b> International Agencies	Poor links between research and education in LDCs and an infrastructural bias in investment
<b>Chapter 8</b> Agricultural Education	Extension is separated from education and lessons about learning are not used in education
<b>Chapter 9</b> New Learning Environments	New communication technologies are not yet being used to potential by agricultural universities

LDC - Less Developed Country

MDC - More Developed Country

Responses to these changes varied. In the USA, Meyer (1993) had noted the tendency to rename colleges and faculties to resource management or natural resources, sometimes to

the exclusion of the word agriculture. In Canada, Curtis (1985) described a market analysis, in demand and supply terms, for the introduction of a new natural resource planning and management course. That analysis investigated the interest of prospective students and employment prospects for graduates. Such an approach was valuable for those courses oriented to employment, as were many courses in applied science fields. However, most educators involved in the field appeared to believe that employment demand is only one indicator of the benefits of agricultural or natural resource education. Other benefits included a wider societal need for such general education among decision-makers of any community, regardless of first employment destinations.

I expected a global reduction in the number of agricultural education providers despite the above comments supporting its role and potential expansion. Some rationalisation would be related to courses failing to adapt to changing requirements of funding resources and students. In other cases, it would seem a logical decision from the point of view of overall university management to fragment small agricultural faculties into their component disciplines within the faculties of science, social science and economics. In the USA, it was been suggested that by the year 2025 there might be only 25 land grant universities remaining – perhaps a third of the early 1990s number. Associated with such a rationalisation it was expected that there would be an emphasis on quality and expertise in specific aspects of natural resource management. The ability of electronic communications to extend education further than previous distance education mechanisms was to allow these entities to impact wider numbers of students.

Some components of natural resource management education were foreseen to be:

- a sound understanding of the role and benefits of education
- enhancing community understanding
- natural resource management education as an essential component of all courses
- a reduction in the numbers of providers associated with a retreat to quality
- appreciation of the role of technical experts and higher education
- appreciation of the role of researchers and improved efficiency in their training
- increasing focus on international food production issues across national boundaries
- shifts in public attitudes towards natural resource management
- resurgence of emphasis on agriculture by major international development agencies
- recognition of comparative advantages in the science and technology of agriculture
- shifting from awareness-raising to industries based on environmental enhancement
- broadening agricultural education to include aesthetic and emotional components.

Orienting natural resource management education, and agricultural education within it, to expected future industries in the sector was acknowledged as somewhat hazardous. It was difficult to conceive the industries that would be of future importance in terms of natural resource management. Nevertheless, I observed publically that we might expect to see the development of the environmental enhancement industry that regenerates saline and other polluted areas, re-establishes rain forests, and replants mangroves, for example, as specialist industries commanding significant income streams for countries with requisite expertise. Another such industry postulated by Ellyard (1996) is that of the waste-into-food industry in cities for food production through composting or other mechanisms. Such

new industries were seen to form one component in the design of natural resource management education.

Such a global context, as expounded in 1995-96, coupled with a belief in the importance of agricultural and related education, underpinned the process of stimulating a beneficial merger, involving many players, to create the Institute of Land and Food Resources. The next chapter describes the process I used to give effect to the vision of a large, high quality, and responsive faculty.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Towards a Merger: The Institute of Land and Food Resources**

The global context described in Chapter 2 was variably understood by many involved in the merger, although the national scene was reasonably well appreciated. With such divergent understanding, the mixed motivations for and against merger of Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (VCAH) into the University's specially expanded Faculty of Agriculture Forestry and Horticulture were acknowledged by means of sharing external and internal information to such an extent that some staff complained of excessive information. Nevertheless, the assumption that staff should be better informed than they had been up to 1995 and have an understanding of the major issues prior to merger formed part of the plan implemented by the management team, which included among others Malcolm Hickey, Barrie Bardsley, Nigel Wood and Janet Beard.

Recalling the steps and events which led to merger is made a little easier by documentation of the period in a book written with Director of the VCAH when I was appointed, Dr. Barrie Bardsley (Falvey and Bardsley, 1997). Tracing the 111-year history to the merger of the six colleges of VCAH into the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture the book relates events of the 1990s in a hopeful if cursory manner, as summarised in the following sections, and is thereafter followed by further information of the launching of the new entity, supporting legislation, and an introduction to the mechanisms used to effect the merger.

The Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture came into being with my appointment as an entity responsible for the combined higher education activities of the old Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture in 1995. It provided a mechanism for the progressive integration of the VCAH and the old Faculty into a single organization, which occurred on 1 July 1997. The events leading to this unification include policy directions from the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Employment, and Training, a national review of agricultural and related education in Australia, reviews commissioned by the University of Melbourne, and internal management decisions over a period of five years.

#### **Dawkins' Reforms**

The Dawkins (1988) report *Higher Education - A Policy Statement* of July 1988 confirmed the government of the day's commitment to achieving far-reaching reforms in the organization and practices of higher education institutions. Couched in the rhetoric of preserving the best of inherited traditions including freedom of inquiry and expression, intellectual rigour, a broad spectrum of teaching and research, and the preservation and development of Australian culture and identity, the report focused on the development of a Unified National System (UNS) while enhancing growth and equity.

The UNS formed a major focus for reform, and while the report claimed that not all institutions need join the UNS, it implied that the liberalised resourcing arrangements attached to the reform could severely disadvantage non-participating institutions. The UNS aimed to introduce greater flexibility in the determination of course offerings and research areas, improved control over resources and revenue raising activities, and guaranteed triennial funding aligned with agreed priorities and performance. Institutions with a student load of less than 2000 equivalent full time student units (EFTSU) were deemed ineligible unless they merged or established formal relations with a larger institution.

In creating fewer and larger institutions, Dawkins' reforms claimed advantages in terms of improved depth and breadth of course offerings, increased options for staff career advancement, economies of scale and a stronger foundation for institutional growth. In addition to the minimum size of 2000 EFTSU the report further encouraged institutions with student loads below 5000 EFTSU to consider seriously their future as independent institutions. Comprehensive teaching and research was not seen to be sustainable in such institutions and it was suggested that a minimum of 5000 EFTSU was necessary before an institution could be considered to be a comprehensive teaching and research institution. A level of 8000 EFTSU was considered a realistic basis for a wide range of programs and a comprehensive infrastructure to be supported. Tying funding to these statements provided an imperative for the merging of small with larger institutions. During the process, the Government also advised that it would not support merger proposals that diminished services in rural areas. Subsequent Ministers through the 1990s did not seek to change the central thrust of the policies, except with respect to funding arrangements.

The Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture, which had been in existence for less than a decade, was faced with seeking a merger partner. The existing Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Melbourne, was one of the larger similar faculties in Australia but none were particularly large, but it was part of the larger university, and thus could benefit from Dawkins' reforms.

### **McColl Review**

To tailor the reforms to agriculture, a team lead by Jim McColl (1990) reviewed agriculture and related education in terms of effectiveness and likely future demand. At that time there were 35 institutions of which 24 provided awards relevant to higher education for agriculture and related areas. Enrolments varied from less than 400 for 15 institutions to more than 800 for five of the institutions. Enrolments had increased across the country at an annual average rate of seven percent to a total of some 11,000 students in 1990.

In recommending means to improve the effectiveness of education and training, the review noted the need for:

- improved integration of disciplines
- improved integration with research organizations and industries
- greater flexibility to respond to changing community demands
- improved capacity for staff development
- widening diversity of offerings

- improved support for staff, both academic and technical
- improved postgraduate training including the possibility of a graduate school
- improved management of service teaching from other faculties
- improved scope for articulation between programs

The review recommended special funding of Recognised Providers, as mentioned in Chapter 1, which offered courses in at least three of the eight major areas, had at least 450 EFTSUs, offered TAFE to higher Doctorate programs, and were part of comprehensive institutions.

In the light of these recommendations, and those of the Dawkins' Reforms, the implications for the providers in Victoria were clear. The University of Melbourne as a comprehensive and major institution easily met the recommended minimum size while VCAH the largest provider of agricultural education in Victoria, fell well below. The only other relevant provider was La Trobe University, which potentially could have benefitted more than Melbourne from a merger with VCAH.

### **The Affiliation Period: 1992-95**

The University of Melbourne and the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture signed a formal agreement in 1989 to seek affiliation. The process was delayed by the Review of Agricultural and Related Education of the McColl (1990) Committee. Intent to affiliate VCAH and the University of Melbourne took place on 1 July 1992. A series of reports and reviews ensued, two of which bear further discussion.

The first, in terms of reporting date (October 1992), was conducted by Capp and Caro (1992) on behalf of the University of Melbourne and took the form of an administrative review of VCAH. The ten-day review included all campuses of VCAH and key personnel. In terms of interaction with the University, the report noted that: *... the University has much to gain from the amalgamation with VCAH and it is hoped that University staff will take an interest in the College and make use of its facilities. Co-operative arrangements for research could be very attractive. The College also offers a gateway to the farming community. The College too has much to gain from the amalgamation, apart from the necessity to become part of the Unified National System. Access to University expertise and facilities will be important in the development of the College. Links between individual College and University staff members will benefit both institutions.* In retrospect, that conclusion might be seen to have been biased and not derived from analysis.

The second and more far-reaching review was conducted by Professor Dennis Greenland (1992) of the United Kingdom on behalf of the University of Melbourne. He examined the needs of agriculture and related education consequent upon the affiliation of the VCAH and the University. The review tackled some difficult issues relating to integration of the organizations and produced a series of recommendations, which while not totally accepted at that time, proved reasonably durable in their logic. The context in which the recommendations of the report were made, noted the rapid advances in agricultural science and availability of scientific knowledge and technologies. It also noted the overall need for

improved educational standards in the general community and in particular the agricultural sector, and the importance to Australia and Victoria of improving efficiencies in agricultural production systems and international markets. The need for greater attention to be paid to environmental issues and resource conservation in agriculture and related activities, and the rising importance of the Asian region as a market with consequent needs for Australians to be better informed about Asia, also formed part of the external environment against which recommendations were framed.

Recommendations of the Greenland (1992) Review included the need for greater flexibility in current courses, the introduction of electives relating to Asia, greater use of combined degrees, raising the profile of food and dairy science, maintaining the applied science focus consequent on integration of VCAH and University staff for postgraduate supervision, development of teleconferencing facilities, maintenance of strong TAFE offerings, development of research in the Colleges, improved linkages with the State Department of Agriculture and the Faculty of Veterinary Science, establishing linkages with Latrobe University, and some general recommendations concerning management and governance of the combined Faculty.

#### ***Appropriation or Invention***

The Land Grant Colleges system proved an attractive means of talking about change in Victoria's agricultural education, primarily because of the respect they had commanded in the global scene but also because the concept meant quite different things to different staff. The integration of research, extension and education was the philosophy espoused from my office although others preferred the school-type approach of LGCs at the times of their origin, some 200 years earlier. Useful as the LGC rhetorical tool was, Emerson's aphorism proved correct, ... *it is as difficult to appropriate the thoughts of others as to invent*. We were inventing our own future yet the rhetoric implied to some that we were appropriating the LGC model. The view was easily corrected and only became a problem later in 1998 when confusion arose with insecurity, itself engendered by crude but effective 'old-fashioned rural politics'.

The University of Melbourne then established a working party convened by Professor Boris Schedvin (1994) to consider the Greenland (1992) Report. The party recognised that the combined resources of the then present Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry and the VCAH provided a unique opportunity for the University of Melbourne to build a strong and diverse Faculty, with sufficient resources to provide services to agriculture and related industries. A Faculty-wide overview of research, higher degree, undergraduate, applied science and TAFE programs and for articulation between the educational programs was promoted. A significant principle espoused by the working group was ... *the establishment of a system of agricultural and related education and research built on collaboration and strategic alliances. The Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture should operate on the model of the Land Grant Colleges in the United States, and provide education, appropriately articulated, from short courses, through TAFE programs, and award*



*courses at the applied and more fundamental levels. Research should be conducted in collaboration, as appropriate, with the Victorian Departments of Agriculture and Conservation and Natural Resources, and with other research agencies such as CSIRO.*

During the currency of the working party, a series of recommendations were adopted by the University Council including:

- a combined B.Sc. and B.Agr.Sc., B.Agr.Sc. and B.Com. and B.For.Sc. and B.Com. and the development of an information kit concerning the new structure for use in schools
- the creation of a Department of Agriculture and a Department of Forestry within the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry
- the creation of a new Chair of Agriculture linked to the position of Dean of the new Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture
- formation of a Joint Centre for Crop Improvement
- formation of a Centre for Food Science and Engineering
- establishment of Chair of Agriculture in Soil Science
- formation of the new Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture from a date to be determined in 1995

With the approval of the University Council for the formation of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture at its meeting on 5th December 1994, it was agreed that the Faculty would include a Department of Agriculture, a Department of Forestry, and a School of VCAH. It was recognised that this new Faculty would be the largest provider of agriculture and related education in Australia, operating from nine locations across the State with many of the characteristics of a US Land Grant College. The need for emphasis, on pasture science with particular reference to the dairy industry, crop production and improvement, and on natural resource management, were recognised within the overlapping agricultural provisions of the University and VCAH Colleges.

The recommendations of the December 1994 report of the working party included:

- approval of the Victorian Pig Research and Training Centre jointly with the State Government
- approval of membership by the University of the Australian Food Industry Science Centre
- dis-establishment of the VCAH Programs Committee
- a new composition for the committee known as the faculty for the new Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture
- adoption by the new Faculty of objectives based on the University's strategic plan and the needs of agricultural industries
- maintenance of TER scores and enrolment of B.Sc. undergraduates into B.Agr.Sc. with advance standing
- establishment of the Chair of Pasture Science
- development of a research management plan involving VCAH
- dis-establishment of the Chair of Agricultural Economics
- a review of programs in agricultural education

- development of both amenity and production horticulture plans in conjunction with the Horticulture Research and Development Corporation
- review of the future of the Centre for Farm Planning and Land Management
- review of the Centre for Renewable Natural Resources for three years

The creation of the new Faculty was contingent on the appointment of the new Dean, the post which I finally agreed to in late 1994 and began with investigations of Land Grant Colleges in the US on March 7, 1995. Effectively, the new Faculty became operational on April 3, 1995 when I returned from the US.

### ***The Pure of Heart***

The University embraced the merger of VCAH in the knowledge that there would be a period of cultural clash, although the older hands who believed in the elite university around which other minor planets circled took Bacon's view expressed in his 'The Advancement of Learning' that... *the sun passeth through pollutions and itself remains as pure as before*. This sentiment seems validated by the history of universities, although it is easy to forget the long timespans of that history. In the shorter term, President Richard Nixon's alternative and more basic observation that ... *if you lay with dogs you will rise with fleas* ... might have been considered more apt for the period.

### **1995-97**

Throughout the affiliation period, there had been reservations about integration. The VCAH was concerned that it would disappear in the large University, and that its self-belief in its service to industry would be lost. Some sectors of farming close to VCAH shared these concerns. Members of the University Faculty feared that amalgamation with the larger VCAH would threaten their academic standards and dilute research efforts. At times these concerns had developed to a level that severely retarded progress and stressed key leaders.

With the creation of the new Faculty in 1995, I considered that a new approach to integration was possible. This approach sought to have all parties agree to work as if a full integration had already occurred and building goodwill between the previously warring parties. This was progressively developed through greater understanding and respect of the practical focus of the Colleges and their links with industry on the one hand, and of the international research and staff base of the Departments of Agriculture and Forestry on the other. This was productive environment that I sought for Faculty planning that would eventually lead to legislative consummation of the merger.

Throughout 1995 and 1996, activities were planned on a joint basis wherever possible. Faculty management moved from one based on a bifurcated approach between policy and management to a single Faculty Management Group comprised of Heads of Colleges, Heads of Departments and Associate Deans. Utilising the Faculty Management Group as

a single clearing house and decision-making body for plans and budget, led to further integration and confidence in the ultimate merger.

Towards the end of 1996 and through 1997, details were developed concerning changes in State legislation to make the University of Melbourne the successor in law of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture. A new University Statute was drawn up to reflect the special nature of the new combined entity. Most aspects proceeded smoothly, although it was a tiring process that consumed most waking moments in consultations, meetings, dinners and planning sessions on top of routine Deanal duties.

The outcome of these deliberations was a single entity, a Faculty that traded as the Institute of Land and Food Resources. It came into being in 1997 with a specific focus on meeting the needs in the medium and long term of stakeholders defined as industries and related parties and the wider society.

### **Institute of Land and Food Resources: 1997**

The Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture which had been created to allow the full merger to take place disappeared through the passing of the new regulation of the University Council on May 5, 1997, just after The Victorian State Parliament passed appropriate legislation during April 1997 with an effectivity date of 1 July 1997. Details of legislation and regulations are presented later in this Chapter.

The intensive discussions and planning surrounding the merging of institutions, and the involvement of stakeholders in determining an appropriate means of governance in the food and related environmental areas of the University, had been productive and catalytic in allowing the full merger to occur. At the same time as creating the mechanisms for full partnership with stakeholders, the University Council approved the change in name for the Faculty to appease the VCAH Council – to reflect its special nature the Faculty was known as the *Institute of Land and Food Resources*.

### **Stakeholder Ownership**

The link between users of knowledge in agricultural education has long been a subject of interest to industry and other stakeholders (Bardsley and Falvey, 1996). Regular suggestions of a greater feeling of ownership by industry and others have been expressed as a means of promoting contact, enhancing the flow of information between users of knowledge and information and those which created or imparted knowledge, and in terms of joint activities in research and educational fields. In the 1980s and 90s, the external environment in which universities operated in Australia had changed significantly as part of the general changes in society's understanding of government investment in services. As a consequence of these shifts in attitude, there had been a growing feeling that there should be increased levels of communication between all stakeholders in agriculture and related environmental areas of education, which in many cases was expected to lead to joint funding of agreed activities.

Through the period leading to the merger, the University sought to strengthen its offerings in key fields, to recast its staff profile in order to enhance services after VCAH was absorbed. This strategy was prescient to the extent that it anticipated changes in government policy, acknowledged rising interest in industry and other sectors in closer working relationships, and acknowledged the applied nature of agriculture and related education and research. Upon merger, the need for common goals and values was recognised in the new University regulation in its agreement to a VCAH provision for stakeholder involvement in the Institute of Land and Food Resources. This closer link was said to meet the expressed needs of those who recalled the days when industry suggested that University activities were not relevant unless they were practical and immediately able to be applied, and of those academics who claimed that industry was not well enough informed to comment on their work. The partnership aimed to increase stakeholder knowledge of the University's activities in these sectors and to so increase understanding about the relevance of science, education and research, and to similarly inform academics as to the needs and perceptions of stakeholders. In taking this path, the University tacitly acknowledged that agriculture and related education represented an area of the application of natural and social sciences as distinct from an area of *pure* scientific investigation, which could otherwise take place in a Faculty of Science. But a certain naivety was evident in the trust afforded VCAH in defining what constituted agricultural industry.

The suite of offerings of the Institute of Land and Food Resources was the widest offered in Australia and incorporated the ethos that education and training should be made available in the form appropriate for those persons wishing to improve their knowledge base. Accordingly, strong higher education and research activities including research degrees were complemented by vocational certificates and diplomas, short courses and outreach activities. Outreach activities included some aspects of what was otherwise termed extension, consulting services, community services, and support to the professions served by the organization. The Institute of Land and Food Resources similarly linked with other offerings of the University, accessing them for the benefit of agricultural, food, natural resource management, forestry, horticultural and related education. Important faculties of the University contributing to these sectors include Arts, Education, Economics and Commerce, Medicine Health and Dental Sciences, Engineering, and Veterinary Science. This was all part of the ideal foreseen at the outset. At this point, I was content with progress – the merger had been accomplished ahead of schedule, nay-sayers who predicted entrenched attitudes to undermine any attempt to change regulations were silenced (for a time) and the next challenge of rationalizing the new Faculty into an efficient organisation was beckoning.

### **The Name**

The Institute of Land and Food Resources was named in recognition of the descriptive inadequacy of the long title of a faculty concerned with agriculture, forestry, horticulture, natural resource management, agribusiness, food science and other fields. It was also to symbolise the shifts in governance arrangements for the new organization. In considering the services that the organization would provide, it was clear that these related to the

agricultural industries and their strong association with the land for food production as well as natural resource management, and the products of both sectors.

The name was arrived at after lengthy discussions involving staff, student representatives, persons outside the faculty, industry, and others. The Steering Committee formed to oversee the integration of systems of VCAH and the University invited the VCAH Council to suggest some names through it to the University Council. With help, the VCAH Council (1997) determined that there were a number of key principles including:

- the need to acknowledge the importance of farmers and other producers on the land especially at a time of an increased urban focus in Australian society;
- the name should be short and embrace the diverse fields in which the organization operates;
- it would probably be impossible to describe each industry and discipline represented in the services of the diverse organization;
- a name other than *Faculty* would be preferable to indicate the changes from a traditional University approach to offering agricultural and related education;
- if possible, to include reference to the agribusiness chain of production, processing and marketing, as well as to the over-arching field of natural resource management.

After considering various titles based around functions, popular words, historic figures, and other options, the name **Institute of Land and Food Resources** was selected. It was titled an **Institute** rather than a Faculty in keeping with the advice of the VCAH Council and with the acquiescence of the University. The word **Land** was seen to be important in meeting the requirements for those on the land which, in Australia, has a special meaning wider than the word *agriculture*. It also embraces the concept of land-care as an aspect of natural resource management, as well as implying the whole biota supported by soil and water. Land management similarly was seen to represent an important aspect of the management stream of courses, and the uniting resource on which forestry and horticultural practices were based. **Food** was seen to embrace food production, processing and marketing, and to have an appeal beyond rural areas. This was considered important as both small and large food agribusiness companies reside in south-eastern Australia, and urban dwellers increasingly understood the importance of food safety and quality. Food was also seen as one of the primary outputs of land-based activities. **Resources** was included in preference to science as it included a natural resource connotation while also referring to other resources which contribute to food and other products from the land; it was seen to embrace both science and management approaches to land and food education and research, and to thereby be an accurate unifying descriptor of the activities of the Institute of Land and Food Resources.

With more than 400 staff, nine locations around the State, more than 6,500 ha of land under its management, and courses in the informal, vocational and higher education sectors *Land and Food* (as it became colloquially known) was potential a major asset of the University of Melbourne. It was the largest such entity in Australia. Its corporate objectives were to provide international leadership of relevance to local industries especially dairying, grains and oil seeds, forest industries, food production horticulture and ornamental horticulture. In so doing, it took a strong focus on the business of agriculture, forestry, food and

horticulture within an integrating and over-arching emphasis on natural resource management and conservation.

### **Making it Happen**

Such bland descriptions belie the effort and intelligence essential to any change in a system that embodies the constraints of the public sector yet maintains the independence of collegiality in parallel with a version of hierarchical management structure.

#### ***Who was this new Dean?***

The University had been seeking a Dean for more than a year, without success – at least one candidate had been offered the position and declined. Within the small field of academic agricultural science managers, the role was generally seen as undesirable. I am I had been approached informally about the position some six or more months prior to the interview that led to my appointment. At that earlier time, I had presented a series of reasons that the merger might not work in a side comment on a consultancy I had conducted about the Faculty's poor relations with agricultural industries. When I was sounded out months later, I was impressed to learn that many of the issues I had raised had been worked on. While this may indicate more that the issues were obvious than anything about my perceptive abilities, it convinced me that the University was serious. I followed up this second informal approach, which led to my seeking out the Vice Chancellor through his Deputy Professor Boris Schedvin to learn more about the role. Some correspondence ensued, culminating in a routine offer, although I have no recollection of applying for or agreeing to the role. I attended an interview with the Chair Selection Committee on crutches as I was nursing a broken ankle at the time – in the same wood-panelled room where I had met with the University when reviewing the M.Agr.St. course funded by the aid program. Within an hour I had a verbal offer of the positions of Dean and Professor of Agriculture. Committed to a task in Thailand for the next week or so, I agreed to consider the offer while away. The Thailand responsibilities were very light, and as my partner in the task was mentor and a past Dean of the old Faculty Professor Emeritus Derek Tribe, I considered the position with his guidance. Despite reservations, some surrounding a reawakened awareness of something more important in life, I accept the position. I reasoned that the match was more than adequate – the University was seeking an external person experienced in managing agricultural scientists, with international credibility, and appropriate qualifications and publications, and I was seeking continuity at home and a new worthwhile challenge.

I defined the tasks to myself as, first facilitate merger was to create a positive atmosphere between the VCAH staff, industry associates and those politically influenced by VCAH, and the university academics. Second, maintain that positive atmosphere and foster joint activities that would build mutual understanding, and eventually respect. The University's approach of appointing an external person to the Deanship facilitated the process. Nevertheless, the management team was all required to engage in extensive travel, frequent public addresses about global changes and the Faculty's role and opportunities, and daily

visits and dinners with the duplicative array of agricultural organizations and agricultural and rural politicians.

Simultaneous with these activities, seeking and obtaining agreement from both groups to run the two entities as if they were one, provided a means of further promoting understanding and respect while also highlighting areas of duplication, weakness, and beneficial collaboration. However, this introduced a further layer of administration without any increase in staff. In the whole process, the only incremental input to management was from the University in the form of special financial support for the Dean and an assistant for the first two and half years. Upon the resignation of VCAH Director Dr. Barrie Bardsley on August 16 1996, the VCAH Council entreated me to accept that role in addition to that of Dean, to which I very reluctantly agreed on condition that a replacement was sought with haste. I also asked that it be minuted that I considered that a fair and effective negotiation between the VCAH and the University required that VCAH have its own leader through this period.

Dr. Bardsley long career in agricultural education and personal commitment to fair-play in all matters had pervaded the atmosphere of integration to great effect, and his departure was consequently felt by all parties. After thorough consideration, the VCAH Council appointed Dr. Malcolm Hickey as part-time Director in conjunction with his responsibilities as Head of Gilbert Chandler College. Dr. Hickey assisted the merger process, and subsequently I asked him to become Deputy Dean of ILFR, which then allowed proposing him to become a Professorial Fellow of the University.

Managing the environment surrounding the merger proved effective, although in retrospect there was probably too much reliance on one figure, me, as both the public face of the University and as chief administrator. Effectiveness was indicated by the completion of the process ahead of schedule in an atmosphere of accomplishment and hope. Senator Peter McGauran, Federal Minister for Science and Technology, launched the Institute of Land and Food Resources to major agribusiness and political figures at a ceremony at the Hyatt on Collins Hotel on 1 July 1997 when I (Falvey, 1997) shared the process to date and next steps through a personal agricultural analogy. ... *In my younger days I rounded up wild Northern Territory cattle on horseback. A friend from that era asked me whether the faculty had now reached the situation with this merger that one has when the cattle are finally herded into the gate corner of a square mile bush paddock. Once the gate is opened the work all begins again as cattle scatter. We have the cattle at the gate, the largest agglomeration of academics related to agriculture ever seen in Australia. But unlike the novice ringer wondering which way the cattle will go next, we have a specific plan ...*

The plan had been developed with industry partners. It called for joint development of educational programs, identification of research subjects, design of programs which kept industry and government employees in their roles or used their professional roles as the basis for their study; it called for joint setting of policy within the charter of the University, joint implementation where possible, and joint funding of these activities.

## Legislation

Legislation by Parliament (1997) effected the merger through Act No. 19/1997. The Act made the University of Melbourne a successor in law of VCAH together with the assets and rights of the company and its liabilities and obligations from 1 July 1997. Scholarships, prizes, bursaries of a continuing nature administered by VCAH were henceforth to be administered by the University of Melbourne, and all contracts, deeds, bonds, agreements, arrangements, guarantees and other instruments, except for contracts, agreements or arrangements relating to members of the staff of VCAH would have effect as if, they were entered into by or on behalf of the University of Melbourne. Likewise actions, claims arbitration, and related proceedings existing before 1 July 1997 and permits, licences, and authorities granted to VCAH became the responsibility of the University of Melbourne. The Act also provided for gifts and trusts, staff and students of the College, and the indemnification of former members of Council. Land vested in the University of Melbourne was subject to the conditions, governance, encumbrances, limitations, exceptions, reservations, and restrictions to which the land was subject immediately before its vesting. Rules of VCAH remained in force to the extent that they were not inconsistent with the regulations of the University of Melbourne.

Giving flesh to the intent of the Act, the University (1997) enacted Regulation 5.1.R3 to create the Institute of Land Food Resources with a Board constituted as a sub-committee of the committee known as Faculty under Regulation 5.1.R4. The composition of the Institute Board was to be ... *nine persons who together possess outstanding expertise in the fields serviced by the Institute of Land and Food Resources including food and agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, resource management and conservation, horticulture, education, training, research and corporate governance; the Dean of the Institute of Land and Food Resources; and one person appointed by the Council.*

Members of the Board were to be appointed by the University Council for three years with the Chairperson appointed annually. Its functions were specified as:

- *policy and financial responsibility for the overall operation of the Institute of Land and Food Resources;*
- *responsibility for the management of premises and facilities used by the Institute of Land and Food Resources;*
- *responsibility for delivery of vocational training courses and programs within the Institute of Land and Food Resources;*
- *oversight of separate entities which are subsidiaries of the University, or with which the University is affiliated, and which conduct activities related to activities of the Institute of Land and Food Resources;*
- *responsibility for commercial activities relating to or arising from the Institute of Land and Food Resources;*
- *a policy advisory role regarding the direction of University-based teaching and research within the Institute of Land and Food Resources; (g) recommending to the Council the appointment, and conditions of appointment, of a deputy dean (Vocational Training).*



The powers and duties of the Board were limited to regulating its own proceedings, constituting sub-committees, delegating powers except the power of delegation to the Dean or sub-committees, meeting as and when required but not less than twice in each semester, meeting a quorum of not less than one-half, requiring all resolutions to have a majority vote from members, and the Chairperson or other member presiding at a meeting having a deliberative, but not a second or casting vote. I was an advocate of the creation of such a Board in taking forward a more corporate approach, but I should have taken more care in choosing its members.

## **Merging Plans**

The pre-merger process used to reach common understanding of the benefits of merger while reorienting focus to clients was one of corporate planning. The process was initiated upon the creation of the new Faculty in April 1995 in two forms; a short-term general plan to guide activity for the immediate 12 months, and a one-year process of planning involving stakeholders and all staff through various fora and plan iterations to arrive at a final document. Meetings took place in each regional area and everywhere else that seems important. The Plan then formed the basis for budget formulation and was serendipitously accelerated by the University itself introducing a budgetary incentive for planned investment in areas which would enhance the University's performance.

The Strategic Plan is discussed more fully in Chapter 4. The short-term plan took the form of:

- integration of activities of the two entities combining to form the faculty;
- increasing contact with industry and other clients;
- developing or sustaining strengths of relevance to Victorian agriculture;
- agreed directions for strengthening, and
- anticipating outcomes of the longer term planning process.

The interim mission was to create and continually improve Australia's most progressive integrated service supporting agriculture, forestry, and horticulture through teaching, research and outreach with strong interaction between vocational and higher education and active links with industry and concerned departments. This was approached through: integrating academic, research, outreach and administrative activities across campuses; orienting activities to continuing client needs; refocussing to provide excellence in activities serving major industries; establishing strong working relationships with other service providers in the primary industry sector; improving post farm-gate services including processing, marketing and consumer needs; and further developing an international profile in both developing countries and among peer institutions.

Through 1995 and 1996, the output of the 12-month planning process was a detailed document presented in three versions; a complex management document with targets and persons responsible for action; a similar version without names for interested external parties, and a four-page summary which was distributed to thousands of persons and organizations. The summary version included the mission to provide the highest quality

education, research and outreach programs, internationally and nationally, for land based and related industries.

It was envisioned that the Institute of Land and Food Resources would be the international leader in selected disciplines supporting major land-based industries represented in southeastern Australia, through discovery and integration of basic and applied knowledge. Its research, education and training would address the production, processing and marketing of outputs from the food, forestry, fibre and horticultural industries within the context of responsible natural resource management. The faculty would be distinguished by user-friendly multimedia learning environments, a client focus, national and international leadership of its staff and programs in research and education, attracting high performing students, and a corporate governance and management structure oriented to maximising external inputs and efficiency of support for academic services. The Institute of Land and Food Resources would be seen as a partnership between the university and stakeholders in natural resource management and the food and land-based industries.

With a considerable degree of commitment to the Plan and the planning process itself, the two entities merged and continued to use the Plan as the basis for decision-making. However, the implications of strengthening areas of future importance in a declining budgetary environment were not been equally clear to all staff, and as later became clear not to some members of the new Board despite detailed documentation and briefings. In some cases, the Plan was probably viewed as a statement of intent if funds became available, although this was not correct and such a view meant that commitments made by staff to clients were misleading.

The critical decisions along the path to merger were made by the VCAH Council, the Faculty (that is, the committee constituted by University regulations and named ‘The Faculty’), a joint merger committee of the University and the VCAH Council, and management in the form of the Faculty Executive and subsequently the Faculty Management Group, as described in the next three chapters. Academic integration, introducing a marketing and enterprise approach to the merged entity and enhancement of research and international involvements continued as planned and are discussed further in the subsequent three chapters. Of particular importance in moving toward merger were the governance processes of the two entities, the VCAH and the Faculty (of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture), as explained in Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Strategic Planning: The Process & The Plan**

Planning requires a context as common understanding. To foster such commonality, a definition of the external environment relevant to agricultural education was necessary. Research and information gathering was therefore conducted about the global agricultural education scene, domestic changes, and market demand and response, involving academic research, postgraduate research, consultants, and visiting advisers. The plan resulting from the detailed process described in this chapter was designed to fit within the issues and trends elicited from this research, which formed much of Chapters 1 and 2.

Strategic planning provided the process to share future visions between the colleges and departments of the university. The interaction of the year-long planning process itself was a catalyst to mutual understanding and provided a means of resolving some day to day decisions in a context of a shared future. It also developed a confidence among staff that the future merged Faculty offered opportunities, which were not available through the individual entities. By involving key external stakeholders, the process also assisted an understanding of the future. Thus the process of joint planning was important in its own right; the plan in which it resulted was also more than the declaration of wishes which constituted many other institutional plans, it was a basis for management and financial decision making. That plan identified key areas, which would probably be of importance in the 10-20 year time frame, and participants in the process had thus considered the need to reduce activities in some areas. The plan was developed within the wider context of the University, which itself was undergoing significant change.

The planning process attracted wide attention and was subsequently used in various forms by other institutions seeking major change. Much of this chapter is an attempt at an objective adaptation of a presentation of the ILFR experience to another university (Falvey, 2000).

### **The University of Melbourne Environment**

The University of Melbourne had been faced with difficult decisions concerning agriculture. At various times it had considered whether the fields were worthy of being preserved in such a university, or whether the agricultural science degree should be changed to a three year degree, or even closed. Some of these matters are now largely anecdotal although glimpses of these feelings can be captured from minutes of the Academic Board and the correspondence of the longer-serving staff of the old Faculty. Thus, not only were the staff of VCAH wary, so were the staff of the old Faculty. Notwithstanding these concerns through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the University entered into the affiliation agreement with the VCAH.

The University had a new Vice Chancellor from 1996 and for the first time had a viable strategic plan of its own. *Earning Esteem* (Gilbert, 1996) sets the mission of the University as ... *to secure the position of the University of Melbourne as a premier research and*

*teaching university in Australia, and to make it one of the finest universities in the world.* This was consistent with indications that leading universities in the next hundred years would be international in orientation, that there was an emerging public funding gap for Australian higher education, and that deregulation of the sector was a logical policy consequence of government statements.

At the same time rising competition between institutions within Australia, and possibly without, was seen as inevitable and the challenges of maintaining equity of access for qualifying students demanded new teaching and learning technologies, particularly electronic based learning. In terms of the University itself, its existing national reputation and performance provided a base for enhancement. However, it was noted that this high performing student profile was from a narrow recruitment base and that the international student profile was well below potential and desirable levels. It was highly exposed to variations in public funding, was enmeshed in the industrial relations arrangements of Australian higher education institutions, and inevitably was tied to the long lead times for changes in approaches common to higher education institutions.

### *Gilding the Lily*

Within such an environment it is often tempting to exaggerate one's corporate-ness, managerial-ness, or fiscal efficiency, not to mention temptations to invent new variations of words. Consider this quote from Sir John Laws, Director of the famous Rothamstead Experimental Station in England ..... *there is further this danger, that a person in charge of [in his case] an experimental station may feel so much is expected of him in return for money expended, that his reports must have something of a sensational character, or his supporters will be disappointed.* This became true in agriculture, and to an extent all faculties servicing the agriculture sector were caught up in the same hyperbole. Perhaps the best example of the 1980s was the extreme claims made from areas of molecular biology.

The seven specific goals elicited for the University as a whole were therefore (Gilbert, 1997):

- Quality People: To strengthen the University of Melbourne as a preferred destination and a supportive workplace for outstanding staff and students from Australia and around the world
- Quality Research: To advance the reputation of the performance of the University as an internationally significant research institution and to strengthen its role as an international centre of research training.
- Quality Teaching and Learning: To create and maintain a teaching and learning environment offering undergraduate and postgraduate education of the highest quality
- National and International Positioning: To position the University as the national institution and to promote national acceptance and understanding of its responsibilities and obligations as an aspiring first rank international institution
- Quality Management: To achieve continuous quality improvement in the academic and executive management and administration of the University

- **Quality Infrastructure:** To invest aesthetic value, amenity and high levels of functional utility into the University's building and campuses and to regroup and maintain all University facilities so as to promote academic enterprise of the highest international standards
- **Resourcing Quality:** To compensate for major public funding stringency over the next five years by making the University much less dependent on public funding.

This well-conceived and presented strategic plan provided the missing institutional context for the plan of the departments and colleges that were coming together as the Institute of Land and Food Resources. I felt that my insistence on the use of strategic planning as a tool for integration was confirmed by Gilbert introducing a similar process for the university.

A focus on areas of strength as depicted in the strategic plan of the then Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture with the requirement to reduce activities in the areas of lower priority or better served by other providers, was consistent with the University's approach of developing quality research and teaching and learning. The appointment of new professorial staff through international search procedures for those areas to be strengthened was consistent with the University's commitment to appointment of academic leaders. Likewise, an approach to deepening linkages created in the Faculty from the Tribe era in international development and inter-university linkages, supported the University agenda. In terms of quality infrastructure, the objectives were also consistent through planned co-location of ILFR staff wherever possible, review of duplicative facilities, and separation of commercial enterprises from educational activities and centrally controlled capital works.

The congruence between the Faculty Plan and that of the University was fortunate considering that the Faculty completed its planning process just before the University Plan emerged. This was more than coincidence – it was an indication of the changing environment that remained opaque to so many in universities and especially in the cosy unproductive agriculture. I was consistent in suggesting that true profitability in agriculture did not mean generating a lifestyle and small surplus from an inherited asset but meant a return on all capital and effort invested in an enterprise – this was the minority of farms in Australia. Nevertheless, old habits died hard and we glossed over such definitions with confidence in the implementation of the Faculty's far-reaching objectives – but it was to have later implications in the creation of Board of the Faculty. To cater for the interim period spanning the one-year planning process for the Faculty Plan, I prepared an initial short term plan to guide operations after consulting with senior staff.

### **Short Term Plan - 1995/1996**

The overly ambitious short term plan (FAFH, 1995) covered the 12-month period to June 1996. During this period, a new long term plan was developed from the client-based planning process. A marketing analysis for the Faculty was conducted through a contract organised by VCAH prior to the formation of the new Faculty and modified to this new purpose. The output of that activity fed into the long term plan leading to modification of aspects of the short term plan. The short term plan was designed around the foci of:

- integration of activities of the two entities combining to form the faculty
- increasing contact with industry and other clients
- developing or sustaining strengths of relevance to Victorian Agriculture
- agreeing directions for strengthening
- anticipating outcomes of the longer term planning process.

It assumed that:

- all concerned parties would continue to demonstrate commitment to creating an integrated system
- international recognition develops from excellence in fields directly relevant to the major agricultural industries of Victoria
- new administrative structures would be needed to accommodate new functions
- the long term planning process would cause progressive refocussing of activities during the period covered in the short term plan.

The goal was to create and continually improve Australia's most progressive integrated service supporting agriculture, forestry, and horticulture through teaching, research, and outreach with strong interaction between vocational and higher education and active links with industry and concerned departments. To achieve this goal, strategies supporting the following objectives were introduced: integration of academic, research, outreach, and administrative activities across campuses; orientation of activities to client needs; refocussing to provide excellence in activities serving major industries; establishing of strong working relationships with other service providers in the primary industry sector; improvement of post farm-gate services including processing, marketing and consumer needs; and further development of an international profile in both developing countries and among peer institutions. From such general thoughts, the detailed long term planning exercise considered means of effecting such change.

### ***Patching the Titanic***

The preliminary discussions to the Strategic Planning exercise were interesting in terms of human dynamic. Subtle resistance to the change process raised its head in ways described in that up-to-date 1908 text by Cornford that much referred to in this treatise. Among other examples, Cornford lists arguments for not changing such as *...the machinery for affecting the proposed objects already exists* - a particularly effective argument when the existing machinery has never worked and is now so rusty that there is little chance of it being set in motion. This was quite the case for aspects of both the old Faculty and VCAH. The apparently support Machiavellian argument that *... it is far better that all reform should come from within* - was also well used and with a more sinister meaning than appears on the surface as it aimed to exclude consideration of changes in societal and student needs. Expressed in other Cornfordian terms, the principle of public washing of linen also gained voice through suggestions that we should not do this in public – even if we are trying to demonstrate that we have new clean habits. Nevertheless, the team pulled together well in considering a joint post-merger future.

## The Long Term Plan

The output of the 12-month planning process was a detailed document presented in three versions; a complex management document with targets and persons responsible for action; a similar version modified for interested external parties, and a four page summary which was prepared in an attractive format and distributed to thousands of persons and organisations. The Plan began with the mission ... to provide the highest quality education, research and outreach programs for land-based and related industries nationally and internationally.

It aimed to; advance, refine and preserve knowledge; to provide TAFE, undergraduate, graduate and continuing education at the highest international standards; and to contribute to the sustainable economic, cultural and intellectual development of the community - through stated goals to (ILFR, 1996):

- provide the highest quality post-secondary, undergraduate and graduate education relevant to industry
- contribute to knowledge across the range of disciplines supporting agricultural and related education through research and scholarship and to develop the role of the Faculty as a venue for research and extension training
- establish the Faculty as a highly regarded source of information, training and education for those involved in the fields it serves, and to make information in agricultural and related industries widely available in forms useful to practitioners
- engage staff of the highest calibre with qualifications appropriate to their role in servicing research, teaching and outreach
- ensure an optimum faculty structure to support its academic aims developed in cooperation with industry, to manage and administer with professionalism and expertise and to optimise and further develop the utilisation of the substantial physical and human resources of the Faculty.

### *A Brave Approach*

Pliny the Elder wrote ... *the agricultural population, says Cato, produce the bravest men, the most valiant soldiers, and a class of citizen the least given of all to evil designs.* Such were some who advanced on this long term planning process. Brave because for those with insight and time to consider, they could see their own employment become less secure, and valiant as they continued the process and acted as advocates among their far-flung colleagues. However, few of us were really from the agricultural classes, we were from the professional agricultural scientist mode, and as such not exempt in Cato's eyes from less edifying designs.

Perhaps the most controversial element of the Plan was the defining of areas in which the new faculty would become strong and demonstrate national leadership. These included the fields of: dairying and milk processing; drylands crops; forest industries; food production horticulture; ornamental horticulture; rural vocational education and training, and natural

resource management. A general level of service would be maintained for other industries via the disciplines supporting the above strengths and accessing the best available information internationally and adapting it to regional requirements. The detail of the Plan is indicated at the end of this chapter. It was implemented in the context of the vision of a future faculty which was clearly to differ from any of the forming entities.

### **The Vision for the Future Faculty**

The Faculty vision as presented in the plan was to be ... *an international educational leader in disciplines supporting major land-based industries represented in south eastern Australia through discovery and integration of basic and applied knowledge for wide benefit. Through strategic partnerships it would provide services to industry through education and educational outreach and research for all major industries in its region with specific emphasis on those fields which its research and education services are internationally recognised. These fields included:*

- *Dairy Industry*
- *Drylands Crops*
- *Forest Industries*
- *Food Production Horticulture*
- *Ornamental Horticulture*
- *Rural Vocational Education and Training*
- *Natural Resource Management*

*It would be based on the highest quality educational services at TAFE, undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and be distinguished by:*

- *International leadership in major industries including pasture-based dairy production, grains and oilseeds, forest industries and horticulture*
- *Client oriented programs*
- *Commitments to serve the residents of southeastern Australia and the world in disciplines and industries relevant to southeastern Australia*
- *Integration of research, education and extension*
- *Faculty staff comprising both discipline specialists and discipline integrators*
- *An ability to attract high quality students and to encourage the development future industry and public leaders.*
- *An ability to attract external funding.*
- *A valued position within the University of Melbourne*
- *Strong linkages to relevant State, Federal and Municipal government instrumentalities*
- *International activities based on excellence in industry and discipline areas.*

*The Faculty would continue to provide residential education while increasing education in formal and non-formal settings through the use of modern educational practices and technologies. Learning environments would be characterised by motivated educators appreciated for excellence by students, the Faculty and the University. Staff would instil through the learning experience, an appreciation and commitment, where appropriate, to*



*teaching, outreach and research and their contribution to scholarship in the discovery and integration of knowledge.*

*Research conducted in the Faculty would be motivated by relevance to industry and the public. Disciplinary and multi-disciplinary activities would be based on linkages between strategic and applied research and collaboration with other research providers and users. Staff would be respected for their industry, discipline, local and international contributions, particularly in applied areas of agriculture, food, forestry, natural resource management, horticulture, and rural development.*

*Outputs from Faculty research would be readily available in a user-friendly format for individuals, the community, industry and policy makers. The role of the Faculty in outreach to provide knowledge and information to producers, processors and marketers would be recognised by many as the strength of a modern Faculty.*

*After ten years (the Year 2006), the strategic plan would have reoriented the Faculty. In such reorientation, core values and relevant strengths would be retained and enhanced. The Faculty would be an exciting place for students, staff and alumni to develop means of meeting society's needs.*

Regular updates to the Plan occurred as experience in working together grew, or as changes in the external environment which could not have been foreseen at the time of Plan's development impacted on the Faculty. After merger was legislated and effective, updating of the Plan usually took place at planning retreat workshops (ILFR, 1996, 1997, 1998) of the senior management, in the form of the (Faculty) Planning and Budget Group.

## **Planning Retreats**

**McMillan Retreat, August 1996:** The first retreat aimed to translate the industry and discipline focus of the plan into actions for individual sites in order to provide a basis for the reorientation of programs and staff at each site. A preamble to the retreat outcomes noted that the Faculty aimed to develop and/or maintain international standards of excellence in selected fields, to which all colleges and departments should make some contribution while providing a high level of general service to students and other stakeholders. International standards of excellence were to be achieved and maintained through the following fields, colleges, and departments:

Dairying	Department of Agriculture and Resource Management Dookie Gilbert Chandler Glenormiston McMillan
Dryland Crops	Department of Agriculture and Resource Management Longerenong
Forest Industries	Department of Forestry and Resource Conservation Burnley
Food Horticulture	Dookie

Ornamental Hort	Glenormiston McMillan Burnley Department of Agriculture and Resource Management
Rural Vocational Education and Training (Centre)	Burnley Dookie Gilbert Chandler Glenormiston Longerenong McMillan
Resource Management	(need for further definition)

Individual sites began a process of defining their areas of major expertise. This was a slow process as the approach called for the development of specific strengths rather than attempting to cover all disciplines for a field or industry as had been past policy. It relied on faith that the Faculty could readily access courses from other educational providers in the increasingly specialised and integrated field of education. However, the required cultural shift made initial progress slow. The first attempt reflected a continued desire to maintain a wide portfolio at which a site claimed excellence even where only minimal staff numbers and expertise existed as diverse interpretations of international leadership emerged. Views gradually coalesced by agreement for each site to focus on such matters as:

Burnley: ornamental production (nursery and cut flowers); turf management; public open space management; growth in undergraduate studies and research; restructuring to save increase efficiencies, and increasing postgraduate students and overseas students in fee paying courses.

Department of Agriculture And Resource Management: Joint Centre for Crop Improvement; dairying initiatives; agribusiness; natural resource management; molecular biology; animal science; soil science, and maintaining acceptable entry scores.

Department of Forestry And Resource Conservation/Creswick: Centre for Forest Industries; CRC for Hardwood Fibre and Paper Science; CRC for Catchment Hydrology; cooperative research priorities; Centre for Forest Industries; further development of the Diploma in Forestry; changes to the Bachelor of Forest Science; cross-campus teaching, and development of Masters by coursework in the Forest Industries and a Master Tree Grower short course.

Dookie: horticulture food production and processing; dairy; natural resource management regional initiatives; production horticulture; natural resource management; food production and processing technology; Dookie 2000; growth in EFTSU allocation, and a masters program development.

Gilbert Chandler: dairy food applied microbiology (quality and safety centres); functional properties of milk and milk products; dairy technology; relocation of ingredients centre; creation of training centre, and implementation of the new campus strategic plan.

Glenormiston: vocational education (joint centre); dairy; wool; horses; core businesses in region; revisions to farm management, and fee for service.

Longerenong: Joint Centre for Crop Improvement; oil seeds processing; grains and animal feeds; dryland cropping; dryland crop products; flexible delivery expertise, and continuing education.

McMillan: outreach; dairy; dairy industry, and fee for service programs

Faculty Office: coordination and administration in support of academic aims; utilisation of the substantial physical and human resources of the Faculty; following the overall Faculty Strategic Plan; promoting a devolved environment; leading in areas such as marketing, capital planning, IT, financial management, fundraising, industry links, school liaison and industry networks and links with central University departments; relocating VCAH offices to Parkville, and extending the Faculty of Agriculture building.

### *Action*

The Plan was intended to focus and minimise unnecessary action. It aimed to improve the Faculty and, if it included spoiling any activities, these were those defined in the Plan as of being of lower priority. Institutional development necessarily involves change, despite the view of some that, with Arthur Rimbaud, saw ... *action is not life but a way of spoiling something*. At a deeper level I know that Rimbaud's insight is worthy of reflection, but that is not the way that some vested interests would have interpreted him.

**Burnley Planning Workshop, June 1998:** This workshop focussed mainly on developing a workable structure for ILFR which reflected experience, consideration of regional, scientific and University requirements, and the realities of the funding environment, and the changing sectors served by ILFR. Outcomes from the McMillan Retreat and a continuing commitment to create a balanced Faculty across production, processing, marketing and business within a natural resource management context, and to industries important to south east Australia's future, was used as the basis for discussion.

Cross-cutting functions of research, vocational education and training, higher education, enterprise management, and site management were considered leading to agreement that the five recently created Departments was the best workable arrangement possible; this was felt to be a significant outcome. The workshop concluded that: the five existing Departments should remain; all locations may be multi-departmental; staff would have the opportunity to elect their preferred department base; information sessions and background briefing be offered to staff prior to their electing a preferred department; a sub-group of the PBG including Board members assist the preceding task; where practical, Deans and Heads of Department be based in regional locations; all regional sites require functions of a Regional and Academic Coordinator, and Site Manager, and that the Board should issue public statements on this process and outcome. A tendency to ignore the financial implications of duplicative rural activities was corrected in subsequent implementation.

**Naval and Military Club Retreat, July 1998:** In response to a Board request, the Planning and Budget Group considered further options for management structures and thus arrived at the following refinements.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Options/Recommendations</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Strategic plan	PBG reaffirmed the 1996 Strategic Plan as providing the strategic direction for ILFR and recommends the addition of 'agribusiness' to the list of selected strengths.	Appointment of key senior appointments were part of the implementation of this plan.
Budget	Operational planning should begin immediately with the possible budget scenarios: Board obtaining once up, recurrent, infrastructure or other funding. University funds be support departure packages and bring budget into balance over three years to be sought.	Overall strategy would be the same regardless of funding support; infrastructure remains inadequate from past underfunding.
Management information and costing	A standard accounting and costing processes across all sites should be adopted. Allocation of costs to fund sources eg. TAFE, higher education, commercial.	
Operational, business, and HR plans	An in-house working group to develop management information data to support developing of rational, business and human resource plans.	Involvement of staff and stakeholders; note government concern for rural communities.
Human resource plan	A comprehensive HR plan to meet desired changes in staff profile with timing and process for departures .	Timing should match curriculum transition.
Academic structure	Maintain existing departments with TAFE and higher education integrated and allow academic staff to express their preference.	Discipline-based subjects with departments.
Academic leadership and locations	Some Deputy Deans, Heads of Departments and professors be located away from Parkville. One regional campus might be the major rural campus.	
General and technical staff	Administrative support at a site would be a resource for all departments.	
Farm enterprises	A consultant to report on management of commercial, research/education and community, and opportunities.	Farms managed outside the departmental structure.
Residences	Review the need, management and upgrading or maintenance of residences.	Future site function would determine demand.

The Plan was modified by these processes only in terms of operational modes. Strategies and objectives remained the same although tension developed around means to reduce services to declining areas, particularly those that retained political leverage. The Plan itself, remained a public document widely accessible throughout the period of early implementation and public discussion. Its outputs were already becoming clear by 1996 with new appointments, by 1997 with the legalities of merger, and 1998 in changed duties for some long-standing senior staff.

Giving effect to the Plan to strengthen key areas was clearest in the creation and appointment of new Chairs, itself a time consuming and extended task that I considered to be of central importance. Cultural change and leadership relied on such special appointments which required support from other staff at middle levels, although this was delayed by events described in Chapter 10.

### **New Professorial Appointments**

Existing Professors in the Faculty in February 1995 were: Chairs - David Connor (Crop Agronomy), Adrian Egan (Animal Science), Ian Ferguson (Forestry); and Fellows - Peter

Vinden (Wood Science) and Robert White (Soil Science). The Chair of Agriculture, the first of the new chairs, had remained unused from the times of Wadham, then Forster (Falvey and Bardsley, 1997), until its reestablishment for the appointment that I took up on becoming Dean in March 1995.

Seeking international leaders and encouraging them to allow their names to be considered as candidates was often a delicate process. Extensive liaison with international contacts, some cajoling and much patience was required as the University was less well known internationally in agriculture than it had once been, and the VCAH merger had not enhanced its image. Within Australia, its image had also been damaged by the semi-public discussions between the apparently opposing ‘philosophies’ of VCAH and the old Faculty. Notwithstanding the constraints, the seeking of a broader professoriate continued throughout the periods discussed herein of pre-merger, merger, and post-merger, including the diversions of 1998.

### ***Brains***

The funding dilemma of universities in Australia through this period, coupled with the dearth of leaders in a faculty with more than 200 academic staff, prompted repetition of the comments of Lord Rutherford, who when once facing a financial crisis in the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge announced to his staff that *...gentlemen, we have no money we shall just have to use our brains*. However, the timing was never right for the analogy in that part of the Faculty oriented to practical above thoughtful pursuits.

A further key component of the overall vision was to create binding links with the State Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) and industry groups. This was achieved through joint funding wherever appropriate. Other activities were entered into through joint research, specially designed courses, and consultancies. However, the symbolic significance of linking the strategy of joint funding to the appointment of international leaders to critical discipline leadership positions sent a critical signal to leading global institutions that the University was serious in its commitment to the sector. It also encouraged the University to add support for new Chairs. With such appointments, by 1999 Professors of the Institute of Land and Food Resources were:

<b>Academic area</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Campus</b>
<i>Dean's Office</i>			
Dean: Chair of Agriculture	Professor Lindsay Falvey	Rowden White Trust- 2.5 yr	P
Deputy Dean: Fellow-Food Sci	Professor Malcom Hickey	DNRE in part	P
<i>Animal Production</i>			
Animal Science: Chair	Professor Adrian Egan	ILFR	P
Dairy Science: Chair	Professor David Chapman	Rowden White Trust 1999	P
Dairy Science: Fellow	Professor Jock McMillan	0.5 Faculty of Vet Sci	W
Dairy Genetics: Fellow	Professor Mike Goddard	0.5 VIAS	P/VIAS
Animal Welfare: Fellow	Professor Paul Hemsworth	0.5 VIAS	P/VIAS
<i>Crop Production</i>			
Crop Agronomy: Chair	Professor David Connor	ILFR	L & P
Crop Science: Chair	Professor Roger Cousens	ILFR	P
Crop Production: Fellow	Professor John Kollmorgen	0.5 NRE	L

<i>Resource Management and Horticulture</i>			
Food Horticulture: Chair	Professor Snow Barlow	0.6 NRE	D
Soil Science: Chair	Professor Robert White	Roper Trust initially	P
<i>Food Science and Agribusiness</i>			
Agribusiness: Chair	Professor Ellen Goddard	0.5 Nat'l Bank	P
Food Science: Chair	Professor Margaret Britz	NRE	GC
Food Science: Fellow	Professor Alan Hillier	CSIRO	GC
<i>Forestry</i>			
Forestry: Chair	Professor Ian Ferguson	ILFR	C & P
Forest Industries: Chair	Professor Peter Vinden	ILFR	C

B = Burnley; C = Creswick; D = Dookie; GC = Gilbert Chandler; L = Longerenong; P = Parkville; VIAS = Victorian Institute of Animal Science, State Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE); Victorian Institute of Animal Science (VIAS – effectively the same budget as DNRE) W = Werribee

## Departments

The post-merger structure of the new faculty required new departments to be created. Using the Plan as the guide, the structure described below was developed from the following criteria:

- integration of TAFE, higher education including, higher degrees and research
- where possible, seeking to maintain geographical integrity of a regional college by allocation to one department
- cognisance of management loads and capabilities
- creation of an academically viable base to teach into Faculty courses and the wider University, and a “critical mass” for external funding, research program development and entrepreneurial activities
- encouraging reasonable flexibility of student movement between course levels and courses
- meet University requirements for viable department size in terms of staff numbers, research income and estimate EFTSUs
- taking a medium term perspective of staff and expertise shifts in areas of duplication and in response changes in priorities, while focusing on long term objectives of the corporate plan.

The departments were styled as (ILFR, 1997):

1. Department of Animal Production (including Glenormiston, McMillan, and some staff from Dookie and DARM)
2. Department of Crop Production (including Longerenong, and some staff from both Dookie and DARM)
3. Department of Forestry (including DFRC and some staff from Burnley and Dookie)
4. Department of Environmental Horticulture and Resource Management (including most staff from Burnley and some from DARM)
5. Department of Food Science and Agribusiness (including staff from Gilbert Chandler and some staff from both DARM and Dookie).

As larger colleges providing services across more than one department, Dookie and Burnley staff were allocated to more than one department. This created an additional management responsibility for the Regional Director in the case of Dookie and the Head

of Campus in the case of Burnley. The following table indicates student numbers primarily associated with the new departments of that time.

### Indicative Student Numbers of Post-merger ILFR Departments

	Animal Production	Crop Production	Forestry	Env'l Hort & Res Mgmt	Agribusiness	Total
Under graduate						
VCAH	279	199	38	277	66	859
Parkville	65	64	145	20	11	305
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>1164</b>
Post graduate	10	20	33	13	7	83
International	10	8	14	2		34
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1281</b>
TAFE	402	230	261	260	616	1769
<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>3050</b>
	(25%)	(18%)	(16%)	(19%)	(23%)	

Board indecision in 1998, perhaps resulting from inadequate preparation of their operational base, led to delays in further staff appointments, a matter itself which aggravated some critical management relationships. The outcome was that the Acting Head of Food Science and Agribusiness was assumed by the National Australia Foundation Chair in Agribusiness, Professor Ellen Goddard until the Head and Chair of Food Science, Professor Margaret Britz was appointed late in 1998. A further change in December 1998 led to the Department of Resource Management and Horticulture arising from its similarly named predecessor with food crop horticulture transferred to it from the Department of Crop Production (ILFR, 1999b) and with Professor Snow Barlow appointed to the Chair of Food Production Horticulture and as Departmental Head. I was having trouble with the Board's overreach, which would have been manageable had I been able to form a better working relationship with the person I had asked to be Chair – but I had erred in that appointment. One casualty was to be an existing Head of Department who was unfairly treated in the confusion – an outcome I regretted for the outset and which was a moement of awakening of the change process beginning to stall. Notwithstanding differences of opinion (ILFR, 1999a) about implementation mechanisms, the Plan served the Faculty well through the four years to mid 1999.

### *Future Harvest*

Joining to envision and plan for a new future which would benefit others rather than ourselves was a warming process. The plan enthused many who saw a larger role than they had previously considered, and a vocation more than a job. At this time and though 1997, my rose coloured glasses saw this inner faithful group as Cicero saw ... *the diligent farmer [who] plants trees, of which he himself will never see the fruit.*

## **Reporting Against the Plan**

The major form of reporting was to the University. Annual operational plans were prepared consistent with the five-year Plan and the University's planning and budget process which, at that time, focused on strategic investment shifts funded through a competitive inter-faculty process. The essence of operational plans for the faculty were contained in summaries presented to other Deans and University senior management. In 1999, these reports noted that responsible financial management required five-year planning budgets that indicated areas for staff changes to strengthen priority areas and reduce activity in others. During 1999, the new organisational structure of the Institute was to be consolidated and a new and integrated curriculum developed for 2000. Focus was to be determined by viability, size, and potential of industries important to south-eastern Australia, with disciplinary strengths reflected in research activities related to needs and funding support within nominated industries. By 2000, continuing changes in the Faculty staffing profile would have been made through considered replacement of departing staff, development of functional linkages with the State Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and purchase and exchange of subjects from peer institutions in Australia, the USA and elsewhere. Beyond the year 2000, the 1997 perspective was of all foundations being in place for a vibrant Faculty in line with the vision included in the Strategic Plan. Myopically, I thought it a well-laid Plan, but it was limited by its reliance on a supportive Board and greater political skills than I possessed.

## **Benefits of Planning**

The benefit of the planning process was not just the Plan itself, but also its use in conflict resolution by a common focus. Additionally, the adoption of a similar approach by the University as a whole and with budget incentives, gave added impetus. However, interruption of implementation of the Plan showed me that David Penington's words during my appointment were learned from bitter experience – some selfish staff take such opportunities to reverse progress while others become nervous from indecision. The vision contracted and its expected outcomes were delayed – and without clear leadership for the ensuing years could be jeopardized. The role of governance and management, as described in the next two Chapters, indicate the complex arrangements which surrounded, and ultimately prejudiced, this bold attempt. If I knew then what I know now (2001), I would have been even more aggressive in fighting for the right outcomes.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Governance**

Governance of the organizations that came to form the Institute of Land and Food Resources reflected the history of each. The VCAH was governed by the VCAH Council while the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture, formed to accommodate a future merger with VCAH, was governed through a newly constituted Faculty. Upon merger of VCAH into the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture on 1 July 1997, the Institute of Land and Food Resources began with an ambiguous governance structure in which a Board was assumed the role otherwise known as the faculty committee that owed its origins to the collegiate nature of intellectual institutions. However, the concept was poorly understood by some from the VCAH entities and in the event the Board did little through 1997 and then in 1998 sought to direct operations, with some dire outcomes.

To discuss governance of the organization over the period 1995 to 2000, the following bodies need to be considered:

- VCAH Council until 1 July 1997
- Faculty of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture until 1 July 1997
- Faculty of the Institute of Land and Food Resources after 1 July 1997 insofar as staff and University attitudes to the Faculty assumed continuity of functions
- Board of the Institute of Land and Food Resources from 1 July 1997, although in practice from February 1998.

#### **VCAH Council**

The minutes of the Council of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (VCAH) over the period 1995 to 1997 portray a subtle and continuous shift towards the arranged marriage between the VCAH with the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry.

The Council of VCAH was comprised of external members selected through a process managed within the Council itself, utilising the resources of College management as a Secretariat; appointments were confirmed by the State Minister for Education. The Council was comprised of Ms Anne Adams, Dr Barrie Bardsley, Mr Greg Brimsmead, Mr Chris Shearer, Ms Trudy Dale (succeeded by Ms Lucy Eggers) (alternate Mr Gerry Bowland), Ms Robina Duggan, Professor Lindsay Falvey, Dr R.A.S. Lawson (from 17 June 1996), Mr Stewart McArthur, Mr Collier McCracken (succeeded by Ms Jan Baker), Mr James Potter, Ms Meg Probyn, Professor Boris Schedvin (succeeded by Professor Adrian Egan), Mr Kees Tesselaar, Mr James Wills, Ms Jan Williamson, and Mr Nigel Wood as company secretary. Though a full member by virtue of my role as Dean, I took the attitude that the role was as a Director and thus to be in the interests of VCAH; the Council was in fact a confusion of motivations. Meetings were held rotationally at the college sites and the rented Office of the Director at 230 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne.

The following discussion summarises points from the minutes of the Council beginning with the meeting of 10th August 1995 which, among other matters, discussed the College Director's report on the public relations which alluded to the difficulties of marketing the four separate entities of the College. The issue of promoting Campuses or the College to industry and students was to form a basis of discussion until the merger when a cohesive marketing plan was developed. The budget was of continual concern and the Council appeared to take a pragmatic view to its management, although it may not have appreciated the full implications of maintaining such a diverse and ageing infrastructure. Longerenong College was noted as having budgeted for substantial income during the second half of 1995 which was considered by Council as unlikely to eventuate. At Glenormiston College, a proposed demonstration dairy proposed by the local dairy industry was discussed and it was considered inappropriate to amalgamate College dairy activities with those of the proposed demonstration dairy, an outcome which was to hamper integration of service activities to the dairy industry as a whole. The meal services at Longerenong as part of the residential account had been recently shifted from College operations to a contracted service thereby removing an area of recurrent loss. The outcome of this decision appeared to be an improved level of service in terms of food quality, variety and availability, and increased satisfaction of the contractors, who had previously been employees for the same function. Superannuation, which formed a continuing issue of discussion until merger, featured in terms of the level of employer contributions for recently employed staff and contributions to the State for the Higher Education.

The meeting of 5th October 1995 took place at Longerenong College. Councillors had a short tour of the Campus, met briefly and adjourned. Messrs Kees Tesselaar and Stewart Macarthur were co-opted to the Council for a period of three years, their terms having expired without any process to seek replacements. In the business arising from the Minutes, an environmental risk assessment survey was discussed and Council agreed to the commissioning of an independent report through Purves Clark Richards with a view to developing an overall environmental management system for the College. It was foreseen that such a report would afford greater protection for the College – although this seemed to assume continuity of the VCAH into the distant future. The University's Registrar, Mr Jim Potter, pointed out that the University was not affected in the same way as VCAH by the Environmental Protection Act 1970, Dangerous Goods Act 1985, and other relevant legislation – but this was either inaccurate or misunderstood. At this same meeting, Professor Schedvin, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University advised of University's procedures in accepting VCAH qualifications. Concern was expressed by Mr McArthur concerning the appropriateness of Melbourne University testamurs in recognition of TAFE and short courses. Development of the residential facility at McMillan was proceeding at this time and it was noted that the Development Manager had indicated that the purchase of products from local suppliers had assisted in raising some funding for the project. Differences between TAFE employment terms and conditions between VCAH and the University of Melbourne were introduced as a concern for investigation. In terms of finances, continuing budget shortfalls at Longerenong College were highlighted.

A special meeting of Council was called at the RACV Club Melbourne on 22 November 1995. The objective was to canvas issues of concern relating to the merger of VCAH with

the University. The College Director and I each presented papers to facilitate discussion. The Council were advised that the Faculty which governed the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry was more advisory than the VCAH Council which, relatively speaking, set policy and controlled resources. It was suggested that VCAH itself could remain as it was and Council incorporated into a revised Board, or that a new body could be created. The openness with which these discussions were conducted was a significant and constructive component in enabling the progress towards a merger to move ahead of deadlines but from the University's viewpoint was partially subterfuge. Ms Adams, apparently repeating a view from the Victorian Farmers' Association, informed Council that the dairy industry should be able to readily identify with decisions made by such a governing body and support them in long-term decisions. I endorsed the concept of a single body to fulfil the Faculty Committee role, and suggested a separate entity to manage the assets of VCAH. At the same meeting a staff representative expressed concern about the relevance of the USA Land Grant concept to the possible merged entity; I replied that the concept had been introduced as a mechanism to facilitate discussion of a faculty which would be broader than a usual University faculty approach to agriculture, while noting that it was impossible for a system similar to that of the USA to be introduced until a mechanism evolved to re-establish unity with the State Department. The special meeting determined that a joint working party be formed with nominees from the VCAH Council and the Faculty to examine the issues further.

The 14 December 1995 Council meeting addressed the issue of an Interim President as the two Governor in Council positions of Ms Anne Adams and Mr Chris Shearer had not yet been clarified with the Minister. Mr Shearer had been Chairman until this point and in the event the Council Executive, comprising the Chair, College Director, two other Council members and myself from the University recommended that Mr Kees Tesselaar be nominated as President. It was agreed that Mr Tesselaar would serve as President until the Council meeting of 28 March 1996. Later in the meeting the lapsing of the two Council members' positions was rectified by recommending their reappointment as Council members for further three-year terms. Business arising once again picked up superannuation as a continuing issue which provided an opportunity for Council members to understand the financial implications of these differences associated with VCAH's choice of funding all of its staff, including TAFE teaching staff, under the higher education award conditions. At the same meeting, the Student Services Committee provided an indication that the VCAH management continued to consider the organization as a mini university by developing new specific policies when those of the University of Melbourne were clearly espoused and could easily have been made applicable to VCAH. In this instance, the Student Services Committee proposed a policy on students with pregnancy, childbirth and post childbirth parental obligations. The Council required that this be rewritten and resubmitted. I informed Council of the continuing decline in preferences for most agricultural courses and noted the allocation of University budget to promote all courses of the College and the University relating to agriculture, forestry, horticulture and food science. In budget discussions, the College accountant, Mr Scroggie informed the Council that depreciation of about \$1.8 million per year was not matched by expenditure on maintenance of the asset base; Council stated the importance of maintaining a sound asset base without allocating any additional funds for the purpose, which was to later

misrepresented by vested interests lobbying government via the rural press. At the time, goodwill on the part of the University and an apparent distance on the part of some Council VCAH members allowed this underfunding to remain undiscussed. At this meeting, a joint VCAH/Faculty Working Party was agreed with the membership: from the VCAH Council, Dr Barrie Bardsley, Mr Stewart McArthur and Mr Kees Tesselaar and from the Faculty Professor David Connor, Mr Simon Field, Ms Miriam O'Brien and Mr Peter Ryan. I was a member on behalf of VCAH by their choice and at their request even though I was employed and responsible to the University.

The first meeting of 1996 held on 28 March replaced Ms Dale as the Student Representative Ms Lucy Eggers, and Professor Adrian Egan replaced Professor Boris Schedvin. Discussions concerning the relative employment conditions of staff in VCAH and the University focused on superannuation for academic, general and other staff. Attempts in recent enterprise bargaining to move to a more common academic form of assessment were supported by the Faculty, and I noted the need to recognise and value different types of academic activities referring to the relative inputs of staff to research, teaching, and outreach. Discussion about a meeting with the Office of Technical and Further Education concerning TAFE funding to VCAH drifted from governance towards a perennial concern of VCAH, access to capital funds. Mr Tesselaar also pointed out that in paying VCAH staff more than their counterparts in other TAFE institutions, the College was a high cost provider and that any further cost increases could make VCAH uncompetitive. In terms of budgets, the accountant reported that, in his opinion, the retirement incentive fund in the accounts was illegal and these funds were to be transferred back to the income and expenditure account. The College Director advised of the University's agreement to the use of its crest on TAFE testamurs; Mr McArthur restated his concern over the use of the University's crest on short courses. I considered that the University's approval was a milestone for the Faculty in terms of University commitment to the full range of programs. My was recorded at greater length from this meeting onwards; it focused on the University's management structure outlined by the Vice-Chancellor in *Building on Quality*, which was somewhat similar to the Faculty Strategic Plan that had been worked out in wide consultation with staff from all locations, and key industry and other partners. It also reported on Student Selection and Marketing noting that the Faculty had again filled its courses with high performing students, as a result of the University's image perhaps more than the image of agriculture, the Faculty, or VCAH. A Faculty Marketing Manager was to be appointed at Parkville to cover the College and the Faculty; the position would initially be funded through incremental University allocations to the Faculty – one of several negotiated bonuses to the Faculty that were hardly recognized by the VCAH Council or its second level of management.

At the meeting of 16 May 1996 Ms Williamson was reappointed to the Board as a representative of the Office of the Minister of Education and it was agreed that Council Committee Elections would be held when the two remaining governing Council positions were confirmed. The College Director, who was also Acting Dean at this meeting, as a consequence my having appointing the VCAH Director as Deputy Dean, noted the University Vice-Chancellor's concern about an autonomous governing body for any merged entity. The Director also noted that the University would have to develop a better

understanding of TAFE, as would also any new governing body for a merged entity. In discussing budget matters, the Director noted that the audit report had shown a good outcome but expressed concern over the foreshadowed five to 12 per cent reductions in Federal Higher Education funding. The University's approach of preparing budgets with five, ten and 15 per cent reductions in expenditure and allowing for a six per cent increase for academic salaries, while not binding on affiliates such as VCAH, was agreed as a basis for indicative College planning. The retention of Professor Eric Lund to assist the Director in a review of funding models was introduced, as was a proposal to seek ISO 9001 Certification.

The meeting of 17 June 1996 was informed that Council members Ms Anne Adams and Dr R.A.S. Lawson were confirmed. Ms Adams was elected unopposed as President and assumed the Chair. A progress report on the joint Governance Committee was received in which the recommendation that a single governance structure within the University had been put. I supported the general concept and advised that the Vice-Chancellor wished to meet with members of Council in early July. In my report to the Council, I advised of the University's Planning and Budget Retreat at Lindenderry at which I was unable to provide specific information concerning the Faculty's budget situation given the lack of alignment of accounting and reporting practices between the two institutions. I noted that a Strategic Development Fund had been introduced for the University through a five per cent levy on all faculties who then bid against each other for the pool so created on the basis of activities which would enhance the University. I reported the Faculty had received 4.6 per cent against his contribution of five per cent for three priority areas of dairying, cropping and forestry.

The meeting of 18 July 1996 received a report from the Director concerning the Governance Working Party which reiterated the need for TAFE activities to be protected and strengthened in any new organisational structure, and noted the need to ensure the protection of staff interests, opportunities for academic promotion and retention of skills, and an analysis of the appropriate balance between research, teaching, and outreach activities. The Director noted concern among staff over comparisons made with the previous amalgamation of the Hawthorn Institute of Education with the University of Melbourne which had received some misrepresentation and negative publicity in recent years. Mr Potter confirmed that the essential difference was that Hawthorn had failed to fill its student quota while VCAH had consistently met its load target – a portentous statement. I reported that the joint Working Party had produced its final report and that it was largely in accordance with the VCAH Council Executive's proposal for a single governance model.

I withheld his support for the Working Party's suggestion of two separate categories of staff being created in the merger. Council agreed. Mr Tesselaar commended the paper on governance and noted that the proposed arrangements appeared workable and that an industry-based Board would require appropriate powers and the right people. Mr McArthur advised that he believed that the method by which the Board selects members would be important and the process should be written into the appropriate legislation.

A Quality Policy Statement by Council in the vein of an independent educational institution was passed, although in the face of a declining budget scenario and imminent merger, it was barely referred to again. A proposal to invest \$137,000 to finance a building to house an Oil Seed Processing Centre at Longerenong was accepted as an opportunity to attract industries, and local community support and international students to Longerenong College in research and training activities. The building was duly built and, within three months of the deferred official Ministerial opening, was closed when industry did not honour its commitment to match funds with those of government. Superannuation issues appeared to have been resolved by this meeting.

The next meeting of Council took place on 4 September 1996 in which I reported as Acting College Director after the resignation of Dr Bardsley. I advised that while current arrangements as both the role of College Director and Dean appeared to be working well, I was reluctant to continue in the role of College Director due to the potential conflicts during a period of negotiations between the College and the University. Council agreed to seek a new Director and prevailed upon me to continue in the role until an alternative Acting Director was appointed, and agreeing to my appointment of Mr Nigel Wood as Deputy Director.

The Lund Report had captured the imagination of many College staff as it anticipated cuts in government funding. On top of the anticipated reductions in higher education funding, State Government through the Office of Technical and Further Education (OTFE) had reduced the Small Provider Premium of 50 cents per student contact hour causing a reduction of approximately \$325,000 per annum for the College; an agreement to increase student loads rather than accept reduced funding had been entered into with OTFE.

At the meeting of 11 November 1996, the President advised that Dr Malcolm Hickey had been appointed as Acting College Director on the basis of spending 65% of his time in that position and the remainder in his role as Head of Gilbert Chandler College. The Acting Director advised of progress in the integration of systems between the University and the College in terms of the data bases used for student management and library facilities, and the relocation of the TAFE unit to Parkville with the University providing specific funds to refurbish offices for the purposes. I advised that a Board comprised of persons with international and national perspectives on agriculture, food, forestry, horticulture, and the environment would suit the merged organization. I advised of changes in University Statutes to comply with this intent and the designing of the new entity within the University which would be a faculty in legal terms regardless of the title used publicly. The Acting Director noted that the development of the 1997 budget had been a primary activity of his office since he had taken his new role and that limited targeted redundancies and non-replacement or non-renewal of contracts had been considered by all locations. His comprehensive report included strategic funds, an update on the Lund Report, relocation to Parkville, Course Policy Committee outcomes, quality management systems, academic promotions, progress of the Oil Seed Processing facility at Longerenong and the unfair lease negotiations at Gilbert Chandler with AFISC. He noted that the high degree of change had induced strains and that management and staff were coping well. The introduction of full fee paying Australian students from 1998 was a further challenge for the Faculty and

a new innovation, a Master of Agribusiness was seen as a means of expanding the activities of the Faculty while changing the culture to one of greater service orientation. I noted the need to further increase the international profile, to strengthen linkages with the State Department of Natural Resources and Environment and other similar organizations, and to develop electronically accessible courses and services for educational outreach. Under General Business, the Council approved that the current format of the VCAH TAFE testamurs be maintained and printed on the University of Melbourne paper, that TAFE testamurs no longer be sealed, and that the testamurs be signed by the relevant College principal.

On the 9th December, 1996 the Council meeting was held at Burnley College. Mr Potter reported that the necessary legislation was being drafted and Faculty legislation would be utilised to create the Board as a faculty committee and not requiring modification of University Statutes; he also reminded Council that parliamentary drafting instructions needed to be with the Office of the Minister in time for the Autumn session of Parliament. I suggested that Council members should have an opportunity of perusing such documents. The Council resolved in a relaxed fashion that it welcomed progress towards meeting the 1 July 1997 integration timetable, acknowledged the University's support to the underlying principles of VCAH, and that the full Council would meet to consider draft legislation when it was available.

Staff were reassured that there was no intention as a direct result of merger to reduce staff levels, although all were cognisant of government budget cuts to tertiary institutions. The College Director reported that individual campuses were responsible for meeting a target budget and that they would do this primarily through a review of contract renewals. He noted that campuses with negative balances at year-end would be required to submit a strategy outlining their means of balancing budgets. I reported the anticipated move of the TAFE group to Parkville during the first week of January into renovated premises, that the general reduction in DEETYA funding could assist the rapid integration of the Faculty and its redevelopment according to the Faculty's Strategic Plan. I also advised that the Course Policy Group chaired by Professor Connor would be critical in determining means of integrating courses between the two entities.

At the Council meeting of 4 March 1997 at the University, the Director updated the Council on merger discussions, observing that the Board of the organization would report through the Dean as CEO to the Vice-Chancellor and manage TAFE policy. Mr Potter reminded the Council that the Faculty must make decisions regarding curriculum examinations, progress and selection, and policy advice, which is in turn forwarded to the University Academic Board for approval. Mr Tesselaar noted that the University of Melbourne moved a long way to meet VCAH's Council concerns and that it had been cooperative, especially in the creation of a Board. Accordingly it was resolved that the draft University legislation be endorsed. The Director advised that an internal management structure was needed, that a workshop set for 15 April with senior College and Faculty staff management had been proposed to discuss this matter, and that the current VCAH staff would have performance assessments conducted under VCAH policy while new staff appointed will have the option of selecting either University or VCAH academic promotions systems for commencement.

He further noted that our joint bulletins continued as a means of informing staff of developments. Mr Potter was critical of the lateness of the circulation of the environmental report although it had been raised in earlier meetings; post-merger revelations of a \$6 million legal liability to maintain college facilities that had arisen from consistent underfunding of VCAH were later to be unfairly represented as somehow caused by the University. Council were advised of the official opening of TAFE at the University, and of an agreement of the University to loan \$250,000 to secure a new facility at Werribee adjacent to Gilbert Chandler Campus. I highlighted the University's document *Earning Esteem* as a corporate and operational plan for the University within which the Faculty would operate. Mr Tesselaar discussed the Glenormiston Equine Training Centre's losses and noted the importance that the College understand its true costs; he also noted concern of the poor 1996 performance of Burnley College. While welcome, such attention to costs could have been paid much earlier.

The meeting of 29 April 1997 focused primarily on merger issues. The words concerning the Board were changed to remove confusion over which fields were of more importance thereby arriving at the words for the Board consisting of nine persons who together possessed outstanding expertise in the fields serviced by the Institute including food and agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, resource management and conservation, horticulture, education, training and research and corporate governance. In terms of structuring of the new entity, I noted that the number of staff in a Department should relate to the number of students and that there was a need for strengthening of regional campuses if they are to remain viable. Naming options for the new entity had been canvassed through the Dean's Office from industry, staff, Council members, Faculty and a range of other interested parties. I noted that the suggestion before Council had included a marketing perspective which could allow a grouping of the activities conducted by the colleges and entities with the Institute. The name *Institute of Land and Food Resources* was proposed and received support. Council preferred deletion of the word 'resources'. It was resolved that the environmental policy be approved in the knowledge of the costs that it implied and went further to recommended that it be assumed by the Institute after 1 July 1997. The Director reported that Parkville building extensions were due to be completed by December 1997 to facilitate the movement of staff from VCAH headquarters as an integration and cost saving mechanism. This extension was a further instance of University assistance; I was able to jump the capital works queue by offering to co-fund the development with rent saved from the unnecessary East Melbourne office of VCAH with their concurrence.

The final meeting of the VCAH Council was held at Burnley College on 24 June 1997. At that meeting, Mr Potter noted the slow pace of instituting a common financial system that had been frustrating the General Manager and hence me. Mr Tesselaar noted that during his time as a member of Council, the College had faced difficult budget issues with reductions in Government funding, and a lack of access to maintenance and capital funds in an environment of rising costs. He reported the strong tradition of willingness to deal with such issues in an enterprising manner and expressed his view that this would serve the Institute of Land and Food Resources well into the future through its difficult decisions; he was referring to rural politics and election promises among other means of coaxing unbudgeted funds from government. Ms Williamson, in discussing staff matters,



optimistically foresaw that the merger would provide opportunities for career enhancement for VCAH staff and that the staff would leaven the overall University profile. The Director noted that early retirement packages in the Office of Director had been offered as a direct result of forecast budget restraints, not as a result of the merger. I congratulated members of Council for their contributions to the merger process and outlined strategic developments in accordance with the Faculty Plan, while noting the tight budget scenario for 1998. The Council resolved to wind up the VCAH Foundation Trust and to recommend the establishment of a new Foundation which covered the whole of the Institute of Land and Food Resources with the wishes of past donors to the VCAH Foundation Trust being reflected in the deed.

### **Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture**

Faculty, the term given to the Committee which traditionally governed a specific Faculty in a collegiate decision-making manner, had evolved under my management to be a sounding board forum for voting on critical issues. The Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture, as a new creation with a new regulation, was constituted by non-traditional members, particularly from VCAH in anticipation of merger of the institutions. I chaired the meetings differently from what had been normal in the old Faculty, which had been a debating forum for staff.

The first meeting of the Faculty (of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture) took place on 24 May 1995. The format of the Minutes indicates a new approach taken in overall Faculty management. I assumed the Chair and control of the agenda, introducing a number of changes to move towards a merger. I alluded to the difficulties and stated that my primary task was to ensure that a merger could take place with benefits to the sector. I outlined a vision for a new Faculty based on a greater responsiveness to client needs, advising that two planning processes, one short term and one long term, would take place, that industry liaison groups would be formed to increase communication using teleconferencing facilities to be supported through VCAH. I presented a management model which collapsed Committees from the old Faculty and VCAH into single Committees under functional areas assigned to new Associate Deans. Minutes from the final meeting of the old Faculty were considered only in terms of information and relevant matters arising, one of which was the proposal that a Working Group be established to determine the role of the Faculty. A Working Party constituted by Professor David Connor, Mr Simon Field (Convenor), Ms Miriam O'Brien and Mr Peter Ryan was subsequently appointed. Other matters transacted at this first meeting including a change of the name of the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Agriculture and Resource Management; an unsupported suggestion of a similar change for the Department of Forestry was not agreed. Such tit for tat was part of the culture of the old Faculty.

The second meeting of Faculty, entered as Meeting 3/95 (because Meeting 1/95 was of the pre-existing Faculty), followed a similar format. I updated members on the strategic planning process earlier outlined as a year-long process involving industry as well as staff from all campuses, advising that in focusing on areas of strength, collaborative arrangements should be entered into with other institutions such as LaTrobe University to

minimise duplication within a limited market when the pool of students interested in studying subjects associated with agriculture continued to decline. Notwithstanding these far-reaching implications of change, the only motion from other members concerned wording of a brochure. The Working Party on the role of the new Faculty presented its report at the meeting and discussion was held over as no-one had the opportunity to read the report. The VCAH Director attended Faculty meetings and I provided with VCAH Council approval, minutes of VCAH Council to Faculty to promote wider understanding between the entities. The VCAH Director advised of the VCAH President's intention to determine ways for the Faculty and VCAH Council to work together more effectively. The role of the Faculty in all matters is indicated in these Minutes by a discussion concerning the financial status of the future entity. Separation of financial matters from academic to ensure appropriate consideration on both areas was gradually implemented from this time, and received a fillip with the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Gilbert.

The meeting of the Faculty of the 20 November 1995 received a draft of the Strategic Plan for circulation to staff as part of its process. Industry and discipline groups had been formed within the Faculty to bring together persons with like interest as a means of facilitating greater contact with industry. The Academic Program Review Sub-Committee had considered undergraduate programs of both entities, the use of new technologies, and in particular the use of videoconferencing introduced in remote colleges. I advised that I had approved the research team of Dr Mohan Singh and Dr Prem Balla moving from the Department of Botany in the Faculty of Science to the Department of Agriculture and Resource Management within the Faculty from January 1996 as part of the Strategic Plan to increase research activity related to industry. The Faculty endorsed my proposal to offer an Honorary Doctorate in Agriculture to the eminent international agricultural scientist for passing to the Academic Board approval, and to invite the recipient, Professor Dr Charan Chantalakhana, to Australia to receive the award. The draft report from the Working Party on the role of the new Faculty was discussed in terms of the need to clearly define the function of a Board, the need to clarify the role of an Advisory Conference, the need to include students in the Board or Advisory Conference, the need to ascertain responsibilities and liabilities of Board members, and to ensure that legal responsibilities of VCAH Limited were met. The draft report was accepted in principle and used as the basis for forming a joint Working Group with the VCAH Council. VCAH Council passed a similar resolution around the same time.

The first meeting for 1996 was held on 13 March. I reported that student selection had been satisfactory, albeit as a result of the high reputation of the University rather than the attractiveness of the Faculty or its products. I expressed the hope of the faithful that activities involving the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and the National Farmers Federation among other organizations could develop means to promote agriculture across Australia. The strategic planning process was noted to be on target for completion by April 1996, one year after commencement, thereby meeting the obligation I had given of including staff from all locations, industry and government organizations and allowing time for consultation and feedback from interested parties.

Faculty met on the 12 June 1996 at Burnley Campus, where I advised the appointment of the Marketing Manager funded by the University, for the development of a series of promotional activities related to the Faculty and VCAH. I then noted that the next stage for the Strategic Plan was to resource it through the Faculty Management Group. The significance of the record lies in financial matters having been received from the Faculty agenda for deliberation with the formation of a Faculty Executive, which I nominated and later transformed into an inclusive Faculty Management Group. Associated with the formation of the Faculty Management Group had been the appointment of Professor David Connor as Associate Dean (Undergraduate) and Professor Adrian Egan as Associate Dean (Research and Graduate Studies) each for a period of 12 months. I introduced the prospect of Federal Government budget cuts and the University's Strategic Planning Fund levy of 5 percent as a mechanism to ensure focus of development activities on areas which would enhance the University's reputation. I advised that cuts should be made in areas of lower strategic importance in the long term as the Strategic Plan required. In terms of Faculty governance, the Working Party recommended a single employer for the new Faculty incorporating all staff currently employed by VCAH and the old Faculty, and that this single employer be 'within the University'. The wording of this statement and in particular the last three quoted words, was to give rise to false hope of some VCAH staff concerning the autonomy of the future Faculty. At this meeting, I advised that I had appointed Associate Professor John Cary as Head of the Department of Agriculture and Resource Management and thanked the outgoing Head, Professor Robert White for his contribution as Head, and prior to that as Acting Dean of the old Faculty.

The next meeting of 21 August 1996 included my reference to the smooth functioning of the Faculty Management Group and a planning retreat that had been held at McMillan College, which had produced an important coalescing of concepts to refine the Strategic Plan. Hanrahanesque concern was expressed over the proposed Government increases in HECS charges and the allocation of agriculture to the middle-band of costs while demand declined for the niche oriented agricultural education of the Faculty. Discussions concerning future Faculty governance focused on proposed membership of a future Board and a desire for research and teaching staff and postgraduate student representatives, while keeping the size of the Board small. The Faculty was informed of a proposal to extend the 'New Agriculture' building to allow accommodation of additional staff. Of the cost of \$1.1 million, the University would contribute \$700,000 to match funds contributed by the Faculty of \$100,000 and VCAH of \$300,000, the last being a figure determined as less than three year's rent that would otherwise have been paid on the East Melbourne facility. The project had received the highest University priority due to new innovative funding arrangements of the University and a negotiation between Capital Works Committee Chair Professor Barry Sheehan and me. I noted that the three critical aspects to effecting the merger were now consolidating; co-location of head office staff in Melbourne, integration of academic activities, and determination of a legal and organisational mechanism for future governance.

### *Seeing the Worst*

The world of agriculture has long shifted from the idyll of the country lifestyle of English romantic artists. Perhaps it only ever existed for the privileged city classes who could periodically observe the apparent joys of a life close to the soil. Yet as philosophers have observed, the life may contain rewarding spiritual benefits, and indeed the apparent preferred pursuit of the spiritually evolved appears to include the tilling of soil for their own sustenance across the diverse cultures. Perhaps it was this freedom from the avarice of modern agribusiness which moved Horace to say that ... *happy is he who far from business, like the primitive race of mortals, cultivates with his own oxen the fields of his father, free from all anxieties of gain.* And Virgil's ... *O how happy beyond measure would be the husbandmen if they knew their own good fortune.* Such a contrast to the ... *we'll all be rooned* ... of O'Brien's Hanrahan so evident in the battler culture of much of Australia and which seemed to pervade middle-of-the-range agricultural conversations. This culture, rather than being distinctly Australian, may derive from British roots as is suggested in George Crable entry in 'The Parish Register Part 1, Baptisms' ... *Like other farmers, flourish and complain.* And yet there is another concerned group who assume that education brings responsibility, and still another group which seeks to live close to nature without demands on other people. Perhaps these are closer to the ideals imagined or observed by our intellectual forebears. The agricultural science I believed in serviced these latter two groups.

The fourth meeting for 1996 took place on 13 November. I highlighted government funding reductions, and the introduction of a Master of Agribusiness as a fee-based course. The Master of Agribusiness had been prepared in advance of the appointment of senior staff to the area in an attempt to break the past cycle of pessimistic acceptance of gradual demise; in the absence of enthusiasm among the academics, I had asked Nigel Wood to prepare a proposal for the submission. The Strategic Planning Fund was discussed as a critical tool in aligning the Faculty to its own Strategic Plan. I advised of the appointment of a Deputy Director of VCAH to me as Acting College Director, the integration of systems, the symbolic importance of moving the TAFE unit to Parkville ahead of the other staff from VCAH, and that building extensions would be completed by the last quarter of 1997 to coincide with vacating of the East Melbourne offices of VCAH. Professor David Connor advised that the Course Policy Committee had been formed and had made some progress on course and subject reforms.

The meeting of 4 March 1997, opened with me welcoming Dr Christian Bonte-Friedheim as the Miegunyah Distinguished Fellow to be located within the Faculty for a period of six weeks. Discussion in the meeting focused on details of the arrangements for the new entity. In particular, members sought clarification on whether academic staff in VCAH would be represented on the University's Academic Board, whether the Faculty would cease to exist upon merger, the role of TAFE within the new structure, and other similar matters. I advised that each of the matters raised had been allocated to the various Committees

working on areas for integration of the two organizations. The Minutes reveal that it was clear that the entity remained a Faculty of the University and assumed responsibility for TAFE academic matters while higher education remains a responsibility of the University's Academic Board. I introduced the subject of a name for the new entity noting the three possibilities of; a descriptive title such as the existing Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture, naming the organization after a famous person - one such name being the Wadham Institute, or naming associated with a major bequest. Such names as the Institute of Natural Resources were seen to overlap with the functions of other Faculties. At this meeting, I tabled a document which summarised outcomes from a special meeting of the Faculty Veterinary Science in which it was recorded that that Faculty would 'establish a task force to advise on methods, including restructuring of the Faculty, to enhance income' and 'at this time, the Faculty of Veterinary Science rejects a merger or structural relationship with the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture.' In providing background, I advised that this matter had arisen from Vice-Chancellor's suggestions that three pairs of faculties consider integration, one of which was this Faculty with Veterinary Science. Expressing support for a strong Veterinary School, I stated that this could be possible within a combined structure that involved this Faculty. The Dean of Veterinary Science attended the Faculty meeting and suggested that there was little overlap with the activities of two faculties. Notwithstanding the position of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, the Faculty minuted that it would 'seek a structural relationship with the Faculty of Veterinary Science which maintains the independence and identity of the Melbourne Veterinary School, and address the criteria identified by Veterinary Science'. In fact no party wanted such a merger of faculties, but I felt a positive minute would enhance my negotiating position within the University. This was the final meeting of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture.

### **The New Faculty – the Institute of Land and Food Resources**

Upon merger, the Faculty ceased to be a significant body for consideration of wide policy issues as it focused on academic issues. A significant delay occurred between the last meeting of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture and the first meeting of the Faculty of the Institute of Land and Food Resource. This was caused, at least in part, by the administrative load associated with the merger, senior administrative staff departures, and a protracted electoral process necessary to meet the new Regulation. Accordingly, the first meeting of the Faculty of the Institute of Land and Food Resources took place on 17 February 1998.

At the inaugural meeting of the Faculty of the Institute of Land and Food Resources, I welcomed members to the new Faculty, emphasising that this was a different body from that on which some persons may have sat on earlier and introduced all members, including the newly appointed Deputy Dean, Dr Malcolm Hickey. I explained that the Faculty's Strategic Plan, which had been developed over the first year of the existence of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture had provided a basis for the amalgamation of the old Faculty with VCAH and for the focusing on specific and disciplines. Confusion over the relative importance of the Board of the Institute of Land and Food Resources and the Faculty was clarified; higher education academic matters were the responsibility of the

Faculty. In any case the major areas of discussion concerned academic matters. The Coursework Programs Committee had developed a proposed new structure for undergraduate courses across the Faculty. New Masters programs were proposed, including a contentiously named Master of Environmental Management.

The second meeting of the Faculty on 18 May 1998 began with me congratulating those staff involved in two multi-media projects which had received University funding. I then updated the Faculty on recent public concern surrounding changes made in the Institute, reporting that "in response to the external criticisms received by the University and the Institute regarding changes to the Institute structure, the Institute Board had taken the significant step to address the situation. The Board has established the Issues Committee, as a short term subcommittee of the Board, which will consider a variety of issues". Such a bland record for a tumultuous period, in which mistruths and personal ambitions vied with trepidation and traditional views, indicates masterful minute taking. I advised that the Faculty Planning and Budget Group, a committee formed as a successor to the Faculty Management Group to consider planning and budget matters, would be expanded to include student representation. Student representation on the Institute Board was not possible under the University Regulation. A new Coursework Program Committee was created with Professor Ellen Goddard assuming responsibility and building on the work of the earlier committee, to view means of rationalising higher education degree and diploma streams and articulation from TAFE programs. Other matters considered were the coursework and fee based Master of Agribusiness, a similar commercial proposal for a Master of Forest Industries by coursework, a Master of Food Science, and the ongoing proposal for a Master of Environmental Management. Consolidation of organisational arrangements for TAFE led to me appointing Mr Val Pollard Deputy Dean for Vocational Education and Training. My authority had been challenged and this coloured relationships with the Board.

The meeting of 18 August 1998, the first meeting which student representatives had officially been able to attend, followed a format of me choosing to present any issues of concern at the end of the meeting rather than the beginning. The Coursework Program Committee reported that its four working parties had identified core and specialist subjects, and developed objectives for diplomas/advanced diplomas and degree subjects in the four streams of agriculture, horticulture, forestry and resource management. The meeting resolved to correct anomalies between the awarding of compensatory passes in biology between the Faculty and the Faculty of Science, as one small step towards making the Faculty more integrated with the wider University and facilitating cross crediting and teaching on a larger scale. A program of Bachelor of Food Science (Honours) was proposed by the newly appointed Chair of Food Science, Professor Margaret Britz as a means of attracting persons from other parts of the University and other institutions. The meeting established awards to recognise academic staff achievements and determined that a paper should be developed on the role of outreach in the Faculty. The Trees-for-Profit Research Centre was wound up as had been the Centre for Farm Planning earlier. Representation to the University to include TAFE and graduate diplomas and certificates in Parkville-based graduation ceremonies was agreed to continue. It was noted that three students within the top ten in Victoria and who had received the VCE Premier's award had

enrolled in courses of the Institute. Under Other Business, I reminded staff to properly advise students with grievances concerning academic and related matters to take these up through Faculty processes rather than writing direct to Members of Parliament; I noted that this seemed to be part of the public debate in which some staff were involved. I advised that Dr Ann-Marie Bowland had received the Chancellor's Award of Excellence for her PhD. Senior faculty staff concerned that the Board was not sufficiently well informed about the academic and management areas in which it was engaging noted partial satisfaction in the minute, 'a joint meeting between the Institute Board and the Planning and Budget Group had been held to discuss issues such as the Institute structure and to receive an update on the course restructuring process'.

The last meeting for Faculty for 1998 took place on 10 December. I presented a number of matters at the beginning of the meeting including a petition received from Parkville-based postgraduate staff concerning their opposition to relocation from 23 Royal Parade. Professor Egan as Associate Dean (Research, Post-graduate and Scholarships) advised that a Working Group had been formed to address these issues. I then advised that the Board 'had made a number of decisions regarding the structure of the Institute and that an announcement regarding the restructure and names of Heads of Departments and Heads of Campuses would be made by the Board after 17 December'. Proposed changes in funding formula within the University which could possibly disadvantage the Institute were discussed and I offered a mechanism to avoid such penalty. An outreach paper was considered in terms of its reliance on electronic delivery. Course restructuring was reported to be 99 per cent complete with the consultation process continuing with staff, students, community and industry through December and January. I emphasised the importance of the next Faculty meeting in debating the new curriculum and encouraged full attendance. I thanked Professor Goddard for her leadership through this difficult and comprehensive process. Indicative student course choices through the VTAC polls continued to cause concern, which was borne out in the spread of TERs within courses. A Master of Animal Welfare was proposed as an outcome from the Centre for Animal Welfare within the Faculty, which was a joint venture between the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Monash University, and the Institute. Graduate certificates and diplomas, and a Masters program relating to Food Science were referred to the Academic Programs Committee for approval. The Associated Dean Research reported that the Institute was involved in two cooperative Research Centre applications, one relating to wool and the other to fibre and paper.

The first meeting of Faculty for 1999 took place on 23rd February 1999 at Parkville with course restructuring dominating the agenda. The Associate Dean for Coursework reported that there had been approval from the Coursework Programs Committee and positive feedback from the outsiders, including the VFF, Dairy Education Committee and Northern Education Committee, on the restructuring of undergraduate courses. Discussion included Food Science as a further degree stream, deadline for entry in the VTAC Guide 2000, course advisory committees, course names, course duration, resource management, and combined degrees. A long discussion ensued. Details of the proposal and the eventual outcomes are included in Chapter 7. Notwithstanding the noting that 'there were some misgivings about aspects of the proposal and that staff needed to be kept informed', Faculty

endorsed the recommendation unanimously with no abstainers that 'the proposal for a new undergraduate curriculum be accepted'. I thanked Professor Ellen Goddard and her team for a dedicated effort that had led to a momentous outcome. This was to be my final meeting of the Faculty as the budget issues that had been largely left out of Faculty agenda were mismanaged in the confused interactions between the Board and myself and the Board and the University.

## **The Board**

The inaugural meeting of the Board of the Institute of Land and Food Resources took place at the Parkville campus on 21 August 1997. The members of the Board present included; Mr John Claringbould (Chair), Ms Anne Adams, Professor Lindsay Falvey (Dean), Ms Fay Marles (University Council), Mr Stewart McArthur, Mr Michael Taylor and Mr Kees Tesselaar. Board members unable to attend were Mr Don Blackmore, Dr Christian Bonte-Friedheim (Germany), Dr Wendy Craik and Mr Ian Langdon. The meeting was also attended by senior members of Faculty management. Upon confirming the Chair, I advised the Board that its role was to set policy and to monitor management and financial operation. The importance of the Strategic Plan in bringing the entities to merger and providing focus for the future was emphasised. Closer integration with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment was confirmed through its Secretary, Board member, Mike Taylor. I emphasized the need to develop wider financial partnerships with industry and the Board suggested that it meet in regional locations to facilitate contact with clients and community. The new departmental structure to be introduced from 1 January 1998 was endorsed and clarification of University assistance to the Board in fulfilling its financial responsibilities was raised.

The second Board meeting took place at Creswick campus on 16 October 1997. The strengths and weaknesses of the new Departments were discussed and I recommended meeting in February or March with joint senior management for joint planning. I advised that the company Land and Food Services Limited, previously known as VCAH Services Limited required a reporting relationship, most appropriately to the Board. In considering financial matters, the Board 'endorsed the approach of a balanced budget and the summary 1998 budget as the basis for management in 1998', although subsequent events and a kindly view would suggest the full implications of this and other decisions were not realised by the Board. A report against the 1997 budget which had been prepared within the Faculty raised concern about the absence of University records and the Board, 'instructed the Dean to convey the Board's concern to the appropriate authority within the University' that such financial records should be readily available. The international member, Dr Bonte-Friedheim requested that he be able to nominate an alternate as he would not be able to attend regularly. The Chair was not inclined to accept alternates notwithstanding my view that this was a special case and that international agricultural perspectives, originally intended to be represented through two positions on the Board, were a critical component of the Strategy; I let this point go.

On 4 December 1997 the Board met at Burnley College with a wider group of senior management involved. Dr Bonte-Friedheim flew from Germany for the meeting. The



Board agreed that its minutes should be provided to the University Registrar as requested by the University because all University activities were under the University Council. I presented a detailed paper concerning appointment procedures of future Board members that was accepted in principle, and a nominating Committee was established to consider the names of future Board members; however, the Committee remained inactive. The Board accepted my recommendation that the Memorandum and Articles of the Company Land and Food Services Limited be changed to have the full Board of the Institute represented as members and to thereby ensure complete integration and control. At this meeting, the Faculty budget report to the end of October indicated that the combined Faculty would nearly meet budget excluding the long-term unsustainable debt at Longerenong.

The first meeting for 1998 took place in the Institute's Parkville meeting room on 13 February. Observers at the meeting included the senior management team in the form of a General Manager, Director Enterprise Development, Associate Deans, and Interim Heads of the newly effective Departments. Discussion focused around the joint Board and senior management planning session to be held at Dookie on 27 and 28 March and it was agreed that Mr John Gilmore and Mr Jim Wood, Chairman and Director of the Land and Food Services Limited Board, also be invited to attend. In my report I advised the continuing implementation of the strategy through the strategic appointments of senior staff, noting that this would lead to changes in the staff profile as a consequence of the cost of the new appointments. The agreed joint planning meeting scheduled for March at Dookie College was discussed and it was agreed that I would provide a briefing paper for Board members. This document was a comprehensive discussion of the external global and domestic environment, the trends within the entities forming a Faculty, and the major forces acting on the Faculty. In terms of finance, the Board again noted the inadequacy of financial reporting from the University but nevertheless, it 'noted that the strategic reduction of activities in areas of duplication and low priority would achieve a balanced budget and restated its trust in management.' Subsequent actions might again suggest that the implications of these discussions and agreements may not have been understood by Board in terms of reductions in activity of areas of duplication and balancing the budget meaning staff reductions. An invitation of the senior management and Heads of Department to attend Board meetings, an initiative of the Chair, was well received.

By the time of 27-28 March 1998 joint management and Board meeting at Shepparton and Dookie, the rural press had been fed misinformation about the changing of the positions of some senior staff. Construed in the press as 'Sackings College Principals', I was publicly seen as the University, and the Board Chair consequently suggested 'reversing' the decision, which created more grist for the paper mill. In fact there was little to reverse since no sackings had been suggested, just the relabelling of campus heads' posts to align with University policy. Prior to this outbreak, I had been attempting to stimulate the Board to be more active in its role, and naively saw the public issue as an opportunity to enhance their involvement. However, the Board informed itself primarily from the press and affected staff rather than the Faculty or the University; both Malcolm Hickey and I saw the beginning of delays in the agreed strategy having begun from on March 27. A short meeting before a dinner with industry and political figures in Shepparton discussed 'the

crisis arising from a number of recent management decisions, in particular, the redundancy of the Principals positions of the Institute'. The objective of the evening meeting was to allow Board members to air their concerns and learn the facts. Neither objective was fully achieved and the subsequent day dissolved into acrimony that was considered unacceptable by many. My view of this harrowing weekend from this distance of two years is that I had allowed myself to be distracted by the unrelenting deluge of press and harassing phone calls, and so had neglected to check the perspectives of Board members. This was a fatal omission since they were largely uninformed about the issues, or even the implications of their own decisions from the previous two meetings. Nevertheless, I thought I could rectify the situation.

The session of 28 March was held at Dookie College where 'For Sale' signs on the gates greeted members together with pamphlets handed out by student representatives, albeit in an orderly manner. The minutes contain little of the discussion that took place, simply recording the appointment of Mr Michael Taylor as Deputy Chair Person and the formation of an Issues Committee comprising the Chair, the Deputy Chair, me, Professor Ian Ferguson, Ms Janet Beard and Mr Peter Ryan to address and coordinate a response to current issues. An agreement that 'the Dean will provide the Board with background information on structure, budget and staffing for consideration by the Board and will ensure that the Board is kept informed on emerging decisions' is the only hint of the discussion of the meeting. I accepted the hostility of some Board members as being uninformed, but did not seek to prolong the argument in the interest of protecting newly appointed department heads that had otherwise been implicated in the letters and public criticisms of the University. The confidence of heads was further weakened by Board interfering in management to proclaim that Heads were to be deemed Acting or Interim until the end of 1998, pending review of the structural arrangements of the Faculty. The Board and I were caught in an inevitable showdown. I had reason to regret not heeding a warning given to me by my Deputy, Malcolm Hickey about certain Board appointments!

Outputs from the workshop were summarised in a further document that appeared to consolidated the Board as overall Faculty decision-maker; I disagreed. In particular the minute that the Board's 'authority in relation to asset management, higher education programs and the role of the Dean/CEO is not clear' was, in my opinion, counter to the legislation that specified that the Board would be responsible for vocational programs while higher education programs were the expressed preserve of the University's Academic Board through the Dean, that asset management was a delegated responsibility from the University through the Dean's office, and that as Dean I had responsibilities beyond the Board. While the Board agreed that its role 'needs to be a coaching, interactive one and not being intrusive through excessive direction and that there needs to be a high level of good faith and trust for the Board and management to be successful', it was intrusive and undermined faith in the Board, leading to the implementation of the Strategic Plan being delayed further. I advised the Faculty and the University that I would try to retrieve the situation, shift the function of the Board to be more advisory, and to address the budget deficit that had been exacerbated by delays in implementing the Plan. In particular, I was adamant that staff rationalisation was essential to support agreed areas with new

appointments and felt that we could balance the budget over a time-frame that I have already tentatively agreed with the University. However, my influence had declined.

### *The Adallumites*

Cornford describes one of various groups within a university as the Adallumites, named for those English politicians who rebelled against their leaders and who in turn were named after the so called cave of Adallum mentioned in 1 Samuel 22:1 as the refuge for the discontented. The discontented of the Faculty from this time had their cave constructed by a Board that I should have paid more attention to at its appointment stage. It was a cave made stronger by other regional and commercial interests being presented under the guise of University guile. And the University was totally unused to this style of aggressive rural politics.

The next meeting of the Board took place on 27 April 1998 at Parkville by which time Mr Val Pollard was Acting Deputy Director Vocational Education and Training. This freed the Deputy Dean Professor Hickey to assist with budgetary issues. Professor David Connor was asked to consider relocating to Horsham. The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February and 27-28 March notwithstanding the contradictions between Board agreements to 'changed functions for some senior members of the colleges of the new Faculty and who have been with the one of entities for considerable periods of time.' The Issues Committee of the Board by now had assumed importance in internal management and external expectations and began to conflict with my day to day role as Dean, and so I sought to curtail its longevity. The Board approached the University to engage an external consultant in response to criticism of the Board's financial management systems and the suitability of the financial management system to the Faculty; the University agreed and paid for KPMG to undertake the task. The Issues Committee then took an unacceptable interest in the curriculum review processes, which was well beyond its purview. I considered this an opportunity to return to implementation of some short-term management rearrangements consistent with the Plan needed with the resignation of the Principals of Dookie and McMillan Colleges. I emphasised to the Board the need to continue the appointment of new Professorial staff in key areas designed in the Strategic Plan; accordingly, the Board agreed that the Chair of Crop Science (Designate) be encouraged to maintain his availability through the delays introduced by Board decisions. Likewise, the completion of negotiations with the Professional Fellow in Food Science produced reluctant agreement. A Manager in Multimedia was also agreed, with the Board making it clear management that it disagreed with me making decisions without its involvement – my patience was wearing thin. It became clearer to most concerned that the somewhat process that had effected the merger and the start of the reorganisation was clashing with this uninformed external group – resentment within Parkville rose. Spurred by the publicity and concerns of staff, students asked to be attend Board meetings and received a dismissive reply; the reply did not mention that the members of the Faculty Planning and Budget Group (which included students) attended Board meetings as observers.

The fourth meeting for 1998 at Gilbert Chandler College on 27 May 1998 entered too far into the Curriculum Working Group and became involved in its management, notwithstanding concerns of senior academic staff. Marketing aspects that were clearly within the Board's purview and useful comments were minuted. The other two major issues on which the Board focused were finances and structure. The Board acknowledged a serious financial problem, notwithstanding earlier presentations to the Board, and the Chair indicated that the University would underwrite the deficit for some months; in fact I had been engaged in discussions more far reaching than this, and the Board was seen to be unduly interfering in University matters by such statements. Through the Lindenderry Planning and Budgetary process of the University I had made arrangements for continued operations with the University's support for implementation of a rationalisation strategy commencing before the end of 1998. I advised my sympathy the views of Institute's professorial staff who had met out of concern for the actions taken by the Board, and in particular the Issues Committee. It was suggested that the Issues Committee be disbanded and that all Board members become involved in decision making in a manner appropriate to the responsibility of the committee. The Chair disagreed with disbanding the Issues Committee and it was restated that 'the Committee was not intended to replace the normal management functions of the Institute [and that] ... management should be encouraged to manage in the normal way.' The influential members of the Board insisted that the Issues Committee continue oversight responsibility for the curriculum process, financial issues, management structure, external communications, and any unexpected issues referred by management. By this stage, it was unlikely that any unexpected issues would be referred to the Board by management. More within the Board's role, the financial position of Faculty farms was introduced to the Board with the intention of moving to a new commercial management approach. The appointment of staff and contract renewals were said, by the Board, to be a matter to be decided on a case by case basis between the Board Chair and myself. This was to become unworkable.

The next meeting took place at the Institute in Parkville on 14 August 1998. The Board was advised that KPMG would assist in adapting the current accounting system, and requested that the Faculty Planning and Budget Group address the deficit by preparing an options paper for reducing expenditure and increasing income; the Board endorsed the Strategic Plan but had apparently not read its intent in this regard. The Board then committed itself to an extensive consultation process before taking any final decisions. The Chair reported; that he would continue to have regular contact with the Weekly Times and ABC Radio, that a cogent case needed to be developed to support and approach the government for additional funding, and that he had attended a Faculty Planning and Budget Group meeting and encouraged development of a Green Paper concerning structure, department selections by staff, income expenditure options and stakeholder and community consultation. The Board indicated its support for the company Land and Food Services Limited and requested the Chairman of that Board to address the ILFR Board at its next meeting, unaware that the unfortunate March meeting at Dookie had so dispirited that group, that all had resigned.

The next meeting, held in a University meeting room on 9 October 1998, agreed that ... Messrs Claringbould, Taylor and Tesselaar would form a subgroup to liaise with those

within the University responsible for developing an appropriate financial reporting mechanism'. Conducting parallel discussions to those I led with senior management did nothing to reduce a gap between senior staff and the Board. By now, a 'Green Paper' about structural matters had been agreed by Faculty PBG with unanimity. The considerable duplicative effort invested in that outcome caused disappointment to members of PBG when the Chair of the Board advised that the Board would not endorse the paper until the consultation process was complete. PBG expressed concern that the Board taking a public media position that cast the PBG in the public's eye as differing from the Board, and that circulation by the Board without Board endorsement would further prolong public concern. Further delays were not agreed by the PBG group. The contentious issue of the role of Head of Department, which had led to a compromise in the PBG Green Paper was accordingly reopened – I predicated that if the Board did not respect the consolidated view that had been kindled over the merger period, old factions would advance their respective causes. The consultation process was productive in involving stakeholders to an extent, although it tended to focus on persons associated with the colleges, rather than the top producers with whom the Institute had sought to form relationships. The Strategic Plan was thus marginalised progressively and subtly notwithstanding its wide staff and stakeholder ownership. In the eyes of the old Faculty staff, the VCAH had won out to the detriment of serious education.

The next meeting of the Board sought to resurrect the concept of a joint senior management and Board planning activity over two days. Disoriented meetings took place at Longerenong on 27 November and Glenormiston on 28 November combined with industry consultations through evening dinners, with members of the Board and senior management attending so far as they were able. While the minutes reflect formal outcomes, some observers suggested that major decisions were made while driving rather than at meetings. The Board continued to insist that the University was unable to deliver the required financial information while acknowledging that the overall deficit was unsustainable; the fact that the University's systems could account for far more complex operations than the Faculty's seemed to be ignored in these claims. Inherited liabilities from VCAH were being denied, and the delays incurred by the Board's interference caused staff budget anomalies. I expressed the opinion that an unreasonable period of delay had already passed, and that the momentum of implementing the Strategic Plan which embodied balancing the budget, could become irretrievable. The Board accepted a Farm Management Consultancy report although confusion remained in discussions and the minutes about Farm Advisory Boards acting as company boards for each enterprise, thereby making the role of manager of the individual farms somewhat ambiguous. Nevertheless, the principle embedded in the strategy and put to the Board in 1997 that farms and other commercial activities be managed entirely separate from academic activities appeared to have been accepted without debate. The Board met in camera to discuss the appointment of senior staff to management positions arising from a restructure by the Board which produced the reallocation of 'fruits and vegetables' from 'crop production' to 'ornamental horticulture and resource management' for the imminent arrival of the new Professorial Fellow in Food Production Horticulture to be located at Dookie as a rural Head of Department. Malcolm Hickey and I, while present in these sessions had made it clear that the existing and still

new structure was appropriate and that this was not a matter for the Board's involvement. I should have left that meeting in protest.

The first Board meeting for 1999 at Creswick on 12 February demonstrated that a number of the approaches used by the Board were not receiving internal support. The preceding matters had seen: I had argued for the reinstatement of the Head of Department of Animal Production against the Board's preferred position of asking the incumbent to continue on an acting basis until they created a Professorial position in dairy science located at Dookie, and for retention of the competent Head of the Department of Crop Production rather than the suggestion by the Board that a new appointment I had made take on the role and be located at Dookie. I had clearly failed to make the Plan clear to Board members when I invited them individually to form the Board. And I should not have assumed that the Vice Chancellor was immune from Board intrigue.

Governance had become mired in management, which in turn placed me under an increased burden as I sought to maintain the momentum of change and balance the budget in a reasonable time frame. This conflicted with what I saw as a preference to prolong inactivity albeit for reasons I could not fathom. It was a sad outcome, and was not in the interests of agricultural education in my view. But I must accept blame for those errors that were mine, which in most cases derive from a lack of attention in appointing the Board and an assumption that the University would remain firm in its resolve to rationalize staff and campuses in due course. That the management systems of the Faculty could allow this confused situation to continue may be gleaned from the historical systems of VCAH and assumed levels of trust and responsibility within the University, which are described in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Management**

Management within the Faculty was conducted through three different entities from 1995 to 1998 after which the Board unfortunately muddled the line between governance and management. The management committees were successively, a Faculty Executive, Faculty Management Group, and the Planning and Budget Group. Subcommittees of these conducted business in specific portfolios and strategic planning activities, some of which were major and long term functions. The initial group, which I began in the month after the creation of the new Faculty with my appointment, was the Faculty Executive Committee, which integrated management of the colleges, and the Departments of the old Faculty, through a cross-section of senior persons.

#### **Faculty Executive Committee**

The Faculty Executive Committee served the function of information-sharing and in itself indicated a new approach to committees. My initial intentions were to reduce the number of committees in the new organization and to ensure that committee meetings had useful agendas, specific outcomes and were of finite duration. In stating this, I indicated my bias against collegiate decision-making when rapid change was the imperative while also belying my perception of the inefficacy of many University committees. While it did not prove possible on all counts to follow these principles, the effectiveness of committees was an important ingredient in effecting the voluminous business and myriad of decisions over a period of major institutional change, merger and subsequently, resolving internal conflicts. The Faculty Executive Committee minutes indicate a general shift from external policy debate through to management detail, which when it became tedious, I changed the Faculty Executive Committee into a more embracing Faculty Management Group acting at Faculty policy level. The Faculty Executive Group met alternately at the head offices of the intended merging partners. The common format of the Faculty Executive Committee minutes allowed a compressed discussion of the business transacted over the period of its existence, from 1 May 1995 to 23 February 1996.

At the first meeting of the Faculty Executive Committee, the subject of outreach was raised and College Director Dr Bardsley who introduced his paper, which was agreed. The subject had reached the agenda through the promotion of the Land Grant College approach as a model for future joint faculty. At this first meeting, I highlighted 'the importance of listening to the requirements of industry, clear objectives, purpose of focus, process and the ability to deliver' in a major planning process proposed for initiation as soon as possible. The meeting of 12 May was attended by Professors Bardsley, Ferguson (Associate Dean, Finance) White (Associate Dean, I.T.), Dr Moore (Associate Dean, Research and Postgraduates) and Ms Probyn (Associate Dean, Academic) and Messrs Wood and Pollard (Associate Dean, International), with me in the Chair. The meeting discussed the development of an integrated budget as an indicative basis to elicit problems that might arise on merger. I advised of the availability of funds through Business Victoria to facilitate the planning process. I also advised that the Centre for Farm Planning and Land

Management was to be reviewed under the leader of Professor McMahon from the Faculty of Engineering; the review subsequently recommended closure of the Centre and I accepted the recommendation.

On the 19 May meeting it was agreed that a 12-month planning process would be initiated taking a long-term perspective; this was to be a major undertaking. The temporary location of the Victorian Office of the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research in the 23 Royal Parade Building of the Faculty was noted, and appropriate renovations were made. The possible conflict, in the eyes of those who preferred long-winded 'collegiate' decision-making, between the Faculty and the Faculty Executive Committee was discussed; I advised that I considered that the role of the Faculty was a general oversight of academic matters, as contained in the Regulation and that the role of the Faculty Executive Committee was to consider long term issues, and in particular to anticipate the expected merger.

It was agreed that a meeting would be scheduled for all staff to learn of future plans. The Faculty Executive considered use of the videoconferencing equipment being purchased using VCAH funds, and also instituted a daily courier service between the VCAH and Faculty offices. By 2 June, the paper on outreach was resubmitted, a one-page budget summary was in preparation, coordination of international activities was effected, the appointment of information technology specialists was agreed, and a formal opening of the new Faculty was proposed. I had firmly rejected a University proposal to move the Faculty from the main Parkville site to the Western Precinct on Flemington Road arguing that the Faculty needed to be seen on the Parkville campus to be credible. The meeting of 9 June received progress reports on continuing issues, while the meeting of 16 June agreed on a general vision paper that I was preparing, that no further staff appointments would be made without Executive Committee's approval, and that the Faculty would be officially launched on 8 August. The allocation of financial resources to marketing was discussed for the first time at this meeting. I was pleased with the process.

By 23 June, provision of assistance to VCAH staff to apply for ARC small grants in conjunction with staff from the Faculty was agreed, and the long-term dream of a new lecture theatre at Creswick was moved to the concept stage. On 30 June, the need to attract further international students was acknowledged, and progress of the planning process was noted as having moved to Round 3. Inclusion of VCAH courses in the University handbook was seen as a priority and one which was eventually agreed to by the University. On 7 July, a research plan was considered, and the need for space for the VCAH head office staff at Parkville was first minuted. July 14 minutes record the concern of a VCAH Principal about the financial situation for VCAH in 1996 and 1997 due to the declining State-funded places, and the likely negative reaction from students and industry due to increasing number of places being offered.

The 28 July meeting acknowledged the incompatibility of student databases between the two organizations and the value of an overall budget for two legally separate institutes was questioned. I advised that this was a mechanism to facilitate understanding and future interaction and not intended to replace existing accounts of the respective organizations at



this time. The outcomes of the VCAH Council's Shearer Report were discussed and the three areas for further work were divided into teams. Developing an Academic Program Plan was to be convened by Ms Probyn with assistance from Professors Connor and Vinden and Drs Moore and McSweeney; Capital Works was to be conducted through Professor Ferguson and heads of Campuses; Staffing was to be convened by Professor Bardsley with assistance from Professor Ferguson and Messrs Pausacker and Wood. The Shearer Report Executive Summary was agreed for general release rather than the full report at this stage.

The meetings of 21 July and 4 August saw the same issues updated and the release of the full Shearer Review. The Strategic Planning process was noted as the major activity and I outlined its subsequent steps. On 18 August, concerns over the words used in advertisements led to discussion concerning the rights of an organization funding advertisements; this was a reflection, notwithstanding the strategy of maximising of goodwill to effect an early merger, of the tensions of two different cultures being forced to work together occasionally. The Academic Planning group noted its reticence to move ahead while there was a larger picture being determined through the long-term Strategic Planning activity. I advised that with the momentum for change established, I would prefer the meetings of the Faculty Executive to move from weekly to fortnightly and eventually monthly frequencies.

The 1 September meeting contained the General Manager's report that a balanced budget for 1995 for the 'old' faculty would be possible due to projected salary savings, and that the Strategic Planning process was including industry representatives through the campus based discussions. On 15 September, I proposed a new pro-forma for academic staff appraisal which included research, academic, community and outreach functions; that the concept received serious consideration was a testament to the goodwill of the parties involved although ultimately University and Union agreements precluded use of this additional tool for institutional integration. The Strategic Planning process was noted to have moved to the stage of inviting industry representatives of the Faculty and VCAH Council to meetings to broaden the perspectives of all staff.

At the meeting of 27 September further updates occurred and the 13 October meeting heard that a one per cent university research levy on VCAH to develop research activities had been agreed. The use of a Faculty undergraduate handbook for marketing purposes was agreed at that meeting and in a subsequent meeting of 27 October, University advertising policy and procedures attracted discussion in terms of conflicts with the unsupervised approaches of colleges. The meeting of 10 November received progress reports, and the next meeting on 25 January 1996 endorsed a decision to retain Dr David Smith as a Senior Associate of the Faculty following the closure of the Centre for Farm Planning and Land Management. The final meeting of the Faculty Executive took place on 23 February 1996. At that meeting, financial contributions from the two departments at Parkville and from VCAH to retain a consultant to undertake market research among students recently enrolled in the Faculty was agreed, CRC proposals in the areas of soils and biocomposite engineering were considered, and the College Director reported that all of the Faculty industry groups were active. From this point, the Faculty Management Group superseded the Faculty Executive.

## **Faculty Management Group**

The first meeting of the Faculty Management Group (FMG) took place on 19 April 1996 with Professors Bardsley, White, Ferguson, Egan and Vinden, Dr Hickey, Associate Professor Cary incoming Head of the Department of Agriculture and Resource Management, Ms Probyn and Messrs Pollard, Coster, and Pausacker, with me in the Chair. I introduced a document entitled 'Governance and Management in the New Faculty' which listed new persons for the Associate Dean portfolios; Research and Graduate Studies - Professor Egan, Academic: Vocational Training - Professor Bardsley, International - Mr Pollard. The Terms of Reference for the FMG were presented as reflecting those of the University's Planning and Budget Committee which the Vice-Chancellor had instituted. I advised of the five to 20 per cent budget cuts to higher education that were expected and their impact on the Strategic Plan that was now available in a draft format. Academic programs were required to focus on 'development of more common subjects across the three degree programs of the Faculty.' Sensitivities of the various entities were highlighted at this meeting by the inadvertent omission of Creswick from a University map of regional sites.

On 24 May, the perennial concern of lower TERs was voiced and the low percentage of graduate students for the combined future entity was raised as a constraint in terms of accessing of University funds. The progressive removal of functions from the old Faculty's Mt Derrimut site to Werribee had caused the Derrimut site to become derelict and it was thought by some that this impacted on the image of the Faculty. At the 21 June meeting, I sought advice on any further salvageable materials, including buildings, at the Derrimut site that may be used to enhance College activities. I introduced the outcome from the University's Strategic Planning Levy from which the Faculty earned \$190,000 to be applied for specific projects in the grains, dairy, and forest industries. The Strategic Planning Levy did not apply to VCAH although with goodwill from the old Faculty members was voluntarily introduced through FMG. A proposal of the Faculty of Veterinary Science to create a Chair in Equine Studies was considered to provide an opportunity to suggest linkages between Glenormiston and the Werribee based Veterinary Faculty. A tightening fiscal scenario required a stronger focus on savings in budgets being prepared and two scenarios were agreed, a five per cent Strategic Planning Levy plus a seven per cent salary rise, and a second with an additional five per cent Federal budget cut for higher education. The tradition that decreased funding per student may be compensated for by increased numbers of students was noted to no longer provide benefits to the Faculty or College. A Planning and Budget Retreat was planned for the FMG for August 1996, outputs of which served the planning process.

The FMG meeting of 19 July received a report that the Mt Derrimut property would be finally vacated and that the University would assume responsibility for securing of the site, with the Faculty having no continuing responsibility. An ongoing matter, not minuted, was the contribution which had apparently once been made through research and bequest funds of the old Faculty towards the purchase of land at Mt Derrimut; in the absence of archival documentation, an estimate of the expense was made and the case put to the University,

which was accepted in principle should the land find a purchaser (when it finally did sell, the issue of Faculty versus University receipts had long been superseded by the subsidies extended to the Faculty to maintain operations in the face of recurring deficits that had resulting from inaction associated with, respectively, Board-Dean disagreements, University priorities, appointment of a new Dean, and a foreshortened vision for the Faculty). These FMG minutes also contained some business-like approaches to financing with me emphasising the need for a definite commitment from the University before any funds were expended on development of building extensions at Parkville, and that the \$400,000 contribution (\$300,000 from VCAH and \$100,000 from the old Faculty) must be used as a lever in discussions with the University's Capital Works Committee. A marketing strategy was agreed and provision made for a marketing budget. Information Technology was promoted through a report requiring significant investment which was supported in principle, but not in budgets.

### ***Active Inaction***

The committee system of large organizations can seem oriented to time filling and intransigence. In terms of that high art of the debate which one expects to find in universities, Cornford (1908) offered me the advice that it may be best applied to arguments for doing nothing. There is, according to him, only one argument for actually doing something; that is that all other arguments, no matter how elevated and elevating, are arguments for doing nothing. He described various means by which nothing may be accomplished. These include principle of the wedge which goes something like “*if you make this logical and fair decision now it will be the thin end of the wedge, you will be raising expectations that you will continue to act justly in the future, I recommend against it*”. Another means of doing nothing is a related principle of “*the dangerous precedence*”, which requires that “*one should not now engage in an admittedly right action for fear that one or one’s equally timid successors should not have the courage to do right in some future case, which is of course essentially different*”. It follows that every action which is not customary is either wrong or if it is right is a precedent and therefore should not take place. Put it another way, “*nothing should ever be done for the first time*”. Well, a number of things were done for the first time in this period of Faculty change, and it tickled me constantly to hear the very terms which Cornford prophesied in our internal discussions and even to see some enter our minutes. The thin end of wedge, and dangerous precedence typified our changes.

The meeting of 20 September heard of proposals presented through Faculty industry groups for the 1997 Strategic Planning Fund/Levy. Discipline groups, a mechanism to integrate staff across the entities, had been slower to form as a consequence of many college staff being unable to specify their major discipline. Coordination of student selection across the Faculty was introduced with concerns raised by the General Manager about the disparate practices inherited from the different institutions. Faculty postgraduate scholarships were endorsed with 50 percent funded scholarships for strategic areas identified in the Faculty Strategic Plan. Minutes of this meeting contained reference to the modification of the Tea Room in the old Agriculture building to offices and creation of a smaller meeting room

which would seat 31 people; a minor entry for perhaps the most symbolic event of the year in terms of the cultural changes expected at Parkville, and in retrospect, while essential to facilitate the merger, this is one of decisions that I might have considered more deeply.

### ***The Real Work***

In 1996, as a committee member, I helped organise a high level Global Agricultural Science Policy Conference in Melbourne to help confirm our place on the map of the international agricultural science; it was an overwhelming success. At that meeting Professor Beckerman of Oxford noted that the increasing tendency for senior academics to involve in business discussions may, despite their protestations, be for many a welcome escape from *the boredom of hard work and the loneliness of thought*. Merging a culture based on long verbal interactions with one more oriented to conservative concise thought produced occasionally interesting debates which, while intellectually won by the latter group in most cases, were often won in terms of real politics and the common language of the world by the former. Lost in the attempts to curb self-serving proposals and reactions was knowledge that the primary function of the University was to foster thought and knowledge. Exceeding Beckerman's observation, the Faculty added a culture of meetings and seemingly interminable discussions to this pan-university tendency.

The meeting of 18 October considered cost management strategies such as redundancies, the use of visitors for teaching, course rationalisation, use of part-time and casual teaching staff, strategic use of Ledger 5 funds (bequests and other income), and reduction in non-salary expenditure. These matters had arisen at a weekend retreat of the University's Planning and Budget Committee and were subsequently modified with Enterprise Bargaining and strategic developments in the wider University. Continued seeking of sponsorship for the 50 percent externally funded scholarships was noted as a strategic priority. I noted the need to ensure a full intake of students in 1997 as part of the overall strategy of maximising income in a period of change. The meeting of 15 November received updates on these issues, and noted that first and total preferences of Year 12 students were down for most of the Faculty's higher education courses.

The first meeting for 1997 took place on 24 January and contained references to FMG assuming responsibility for the international portfolio while Mr Pollard remained Associate Dean. A strategic planning day was to be set-aside for the FMG. By 18 February, the Course Policy Committee advised their conclusion that budget imperatives would force restructuring of courses and that restructuring should be cognisant of the position in the market place which the Faculty would occupy in future. A successful opening by the Vice-Chancellor of the TAFE unit offices at Parkville built in the old Agriculture Tea Room, was noted. An industry newsletter distributed quarterly to industry and twice yearly to Alumni was agreed to replace the magazine *Connections* which VCAH had to that time produced.

The meeting of 27 March included reference to electronic agricultural education consortium A\*DEC which I recommended as a mechanism for the development of wider

delivery of courses, and a means of accessing courses from Land Grant Universities and other universities; Professor Connor proposed the development of the strategy that might lead to membership of that group. In other strategic discussions a possible affiliation arrangement with Marcus Oldham College was considered although not acted on definitively. I reiterated the need for wider interest in international agricultural, forestry, horticulture and food matters among Australian students. By 15 April, a Faculty newsletter had been proposed in a four-page format, including an industry focus; it was subsequently used to much benefit through the period of its existence.

On 23 May, I advised the FMG; of progress towards merger in terms elaborated elsewhere concerning the passing of legislation by Parliament, the passing of regulations by the University Council, and that merger Working Groups were on or ahead of schedule, except for finance. I proposed that a Planning and Budget Group, which had a function similar to the University's Planning and Budget Committee, replace the FMG from July.

I introduced new Associate Deans arrangements with roles of 'Coursework and Learning', and 'Research, Postgraduates and Scholarships.' These roles were to shift from coordinating to being proactive, and with support from the Faculty office, including the salaries being paid by the Faculty office. The outreach function was to be assigned to the Deputy Dean and Regional Directors (Principals), I would assume the international portfolio, with Mr Pollard being a member of the International Committee. The issue of access to capital funds for TAFE facilities on VCAH Colleges was raised once more; a perennial lobby subject, this issue was seen in the context of an imminent merger having the attention of Parliament. A launch for the new Faculty was planned as a breakfast at the Hyatt Hotel with the Federal Minister for Science and Technology officiating. Assumption of responsibility for the Strathfieldsaye property by the Faculty from a University committee was discussed and gradually created a profitable entity, notwithstanding large debts accumulated through prior capital management approaches of the central University. I advised that the Faculty would accept management of Strathfieldsaye provided that profits realised from its management accumulated to the Faculty and existing debts remained those of the University. Approaching the effectivity date of merger, I drew the attention of FMG members to a document that outlined excessive leave balances by many staff, which was to be reduced in order to effect a manageable budget scenario in the future.

The final meeting of the FMG took place on 4 July 1997. I summarised outcomes from the University's Planning and Budget Conference in which the Strategic Planning Fund/Levy of five per cent was returned in full in recognition of the tight budget scenario faced by higher education in general. However, in doing so, those activities proposed for the Strategic Planning Fund were accepted in the Faculty as priorities for funding, these included: creation of a Chair in Food Science; appointment of a Director of a Dairy Centre or group, appointment of a senior lecturer in agribusiness; appointment of lecturer in oilseeds to be located in the oilseed production area, and an initiative concerning parks involving forestry and Burnley. These initiatives were mainly implemented, notwithstanding the changing budgets scenario, in keeping with the Faculty Strategic Plan; the parks initiative did not eventuate. I also introduced a new committee structure which combined various existing committees. I advised that the FMG would be replaced by a

Planning and Budget Group for which Terms of Reference had been prepared and circulated.

### **Planning and Budget Group**

The first meeting of the Faculty Planning and Budget Group took place on 15 August 1997. The group comprised Heads of Departments, Heads of Campuses, other senior management staff and any professors of the Faculty who chose to attend. A proposal to shift EFTSUs from undergraduate to postgraduate loads was accepted, although subsequently left unimplemented as difficulties in attracting large numbers of Australian postgraduate candidates became evident. It was agreed that \$14,000 be allocated for three international marketing visits in 1997 and that provision for such activities be included in future budgets, that a sum of \$120,000 be allocated in 1998 for stipend and research support for international scholarships used in conjunction with MIRS awards for international candidates in fields consistent with the Faculty's Strategic Plan, and that an allocation of \$31,000 be made to fund graduate scholarships for Australian students to undertake field work in Asia. Looking towards the future, new indicative departmental budgets were to be prepared for Animal Production, Crop Production, Food Science and Agribusiness, Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resource Management, Asset Management and Enterprises, and the Dean's Office. A planning retreat was agreed for later in 1997. The PBG also authorised a web-based newsletter be established to convey information to all staff.

The 12 September meeting reconsidered the \$120,000 commitment to international scholarships and downgraded this to being 'issue to be given high priority during the 1998 budget discussions'. In discussing minutes of the previous meeting, it was also raised that there was no recollection by some that the words 'noting that one or two Campuses may be in deficit and must clear this during 1997' had been agreed. A development of a Flexible Learning Unit with appropriate budget was agreed in principle and an incentive for full fee paying students to be passed through to departments was agreed. Consideration of College staff enrolling in graduate programs was given with the need for incentives, although the matter was deferred for later consideration. On 3 October, the PBG agreed that fee-remission scholarships could be offered at 50 per cent or 100 per cent where this suited the strategic directions of the Faculty. It also agreed that the principle for 1998 budget was a balanced budget meeting OTFE and other audit criteria. The PBG, well aware of the need for reductions in expenditure, acted responsibly in agreeing to a difficult budget. I was content that we had created a workable relationship between previously wary parties and now looked forward to the major game-changer of designing a superior faculty.

The meeting of 14 November welcomed Professor Ellen Goddard as National Australia Bank Foundation Chair in Agribusiness. The meeting considered a document concerning the right to conduct consultancy work by staff and suggested some redrafting for future consideration. The intent had been to clarify the use of the University's allowance of 'up to 13 days per year on appropriate external work' and to curb abuses by those entering the University's system since the common interpretation was that such leave would generate benefits to the University usually through research publications. The final meeting for 1997

was held on 12 December to consider progress on various routine matters, and student fees and charges. It was also agreed that savings such as the cessation of rent payments on the East Melbourne premises of VCAH be quarantined for leveraging future capital funds from the University. Access to the laboratory and research equipment in the new department structure raised some concerns and it was agreed that the Assets Management Committee would develop an appropriate management system which met the needs of users.

At the meeting of 27 February 1998, I confirmed that new Departments had taken effect on 1 January and that departmental plans were subsets of the overall Faculty plan. The report of the Director Enterprise Development was received; I had created this position for Nigel Wood to facilitate the engagement of external partners in raising funds for the Faculty and included preparations for a Master of Agribusiness degree, development of a corporate vineyard proposal for Dookie, and international consulting activities.

The meeting on 24 April followed the unfortunate Board meeting, which PBG members had attended as observers, yet contained little reference to anything extraordinary although a number of firm opinions were expressed surrounding the meeting. Universitas 21, an international grouping of leading public sector universities is mentioned in terms of the formation of linkages with the Universities of British Columbia and Queensland for shared coursework development. By 29 May, the PBG had agreed that a Planning and Budget Workshop should be conducted at Burnley on 12 June, and that staff preferences for disciplines or departments should be known before that date to facilitate clarification of appropriate departmental structures. It was agreed that the Group should meet every three rather than four weeks. The meeting inconclusively considered a proposal to purchase of land at Longerengong in conjunction with DNRE.

The meeting of 26 June welcomed Professor Margaret Britz as the Foundation Chair of Food Science and Head of the Department of Food Science and Agribusiness. The meeting considered the implications of the new Higher Education Contract of Employment Award 1998, which had significant implications for management systems of the colleges as it precluded use of contracts as a mechanism for managing cutbacks and staff changes where continuous activity was in evidence. The meeting agreed that the cost of retaining all academic staff of the Faculty under the Higher Education Contract of Employment Award 1998 compared to the cost under TAFE Award was to be determined, although this was not done in the face of many conflicting statements about employment. A two-day strategic planning workshop was planned for July 5 and 6 to follow up outcomes from the Burnley workshop. With confusion in the management roles as a result of Board intervention, uncertainties and lack of control over resources, particularly by Heads of Department, flavoured these discussions and heralded a period of inertia. Among the changes in functions, Mr Val Pollard had shifted from Principal at Glenormiston to Acting Deputy Dean for Vocational Education and Training; the issue of capital funding for TAFE activities was raised again. Allocation of space to postgraduate students, was discussed although inadequately resolved as it subsequently erupted during late 1998 in response to University intervention. The first reference to preparation for a Cooperative Research Centre bid for the dairy industry were included in these minutes; subsequent minutes record that this was abandoned and that I was 'most disappointed' and considered this an

unnecessary casualty of the Board's penchant for engaging in management above governance. I encouraged departmental meetings to keep staff informed of developments although this intent was again thwarted by the uncertainty of the authority of the Heads of Departments all of whom felt 'downgraded' by the Board.

The meeting of 7 August re-minuted an approach to the Faculty's high exposure to the Higher Education Award. A joint session between the Board and the Planning and Budget Group was planned for 14 October, although it was noted that Board members would be arriving at various times through the afternoon. The Planning and Budget Group resolved to confirm to the Board that it was the PBG's mandate to resolve staffing issues, ratify the outcomes from its Naval and Military Club planning session, to identify new income, to determine how the PBG and Board could work together, and to plan capital investment and a three to four year budget scenario. The minutes also contained a report on changes in vocational education and training and a Faculty policy for the management of Special Study Program leave (Sabbatical Leave). The minutes further note the need for budget allocations to marketing relating to the University's Gulf States mission, the South Pacific, India, the USA, and other markets. By 28 August, the PBG was addressing routine management matters and regarding issues of management autonomy. A travel leave schedule process, the preparing of proposed revisions to the Roper Bequest, continual update of the website and other routine issues were agreed. By 18 September, I reported that the Faculty had again attracted funds for a 1999 Miegunyah Distinguished Fellow, Dr Paul O'Connell. I also advised that coursework program proposals had created rumours and a lobby concerning possible changes and degree titles; I advised the PBG that his response had been that no consideration had been given to names as this was an issue to be raised later in response to marketing and academic considerations rather than lobby. The Director Enterprise Development advised further development of the Faculty's electronic delivery of courses through a visit of the Associate Dean (Instruction) from Cornell University, and further development of the Universitas 21 grouping for agriculture involving the Universities of British Colombia, Queensland, and Melbourne.

The next meeting on 9 October agreed to a revision in the appointment of Roper Fellows, and appointment of a consultant to seriously address management of farms and residences in a commercial manner. By 30 October, I advised of the appointment of Dr Alan Hillier as Professorial Fellow in the Department of Food Science and Agribusiness with support from the Rowden-White Bequest of the University. An alliance between the Institute, Agriculture Victoria and the Dairy Research and Development Corporation was introduced as the outcome of detailed negotiations within the Faculty's dairy strategy. In terms of budgetary matters, it was minuted that 'prior to the Planning and Budget Group supporting the chart of accounts, more information be forwarded to the next meeting or if there are time restrictions, circulated to members for comment'; these words reflected the concerns of members over the rising budget deficit in the face of Board's prohibition on Faculty action to reduce budget expenditure on salaries, and perhaps some undue influence of the Vice Chancellor. By now, I was more similar to a Dean of a large faculty in the University the Executive function envisaged at my appointment; this was partially my own fault for having insisted on a functional Board but failing to appoint persons with knowledge of



higher agricultural education and Australian agriculture's global place; it was becoming difficult to manage this scattering hares set running by this confusion.

On 20 November, the report of the proposed agenda for the planning session with the Board was discussed in terms of the Green Paper resulting from detailed PBG deliberations, in camera, and with industry. The Group indicated unanimity on the contents of this paper and the need to move forward from 1998 to confirm departmental structures, and an approach towards meeting budget in a realistic time frame. The PBG understood that the Board would endorse the unanimity and quickly convey this to external groups. However, this was not to be the outcome. At this PBG meeting, Professor Roger Cousens, recently appointed Professor of the Crop Production introduced marketing strategies used by other institutions that had been more effective than some of the activities undertaken by the University of Melbourne. The purchase of land next to VIDA for Longerenong was somewhat surprisingly supported in principle, and the issue of Safety Map, a self-insurance mechanism of the wider University, was raised. The Faculty failed to meet Safety Map deadlines while struggling with the continuing \$6 million bill for essential work on college facilities.

The final meeting of the PBG in 1998 was held on 11 December. I advised that ILFR was the only Faculty not to have submitted a budget to the University and that I did not agree with the Board's reasons for this being delayed. Discussion concerning matters arising from the minutes focused on upgrading of the ILFR home page, and a process of allowing staff to indicate their preferences for the departments to which they could be assigned. The next stage of the Coursework Programs Committee's activities was agreed to allow the new coursework program and the old programs for 1999 to be allocated to departments as a prelude for the formation of individual department budgets. Feedback from the Green Paper provided by stakeholders was tabled. The minutes understated PBG's 'concern about process which the Board adopted after release of the Green paper with respect to appointments to senior positions'. A tongue-in-cheek comment aimed at mollifying the destructive atmosphere entered the minutes as 'other members commented on the vital role the Board had played in helping ILFR'; the minutes also noted conflict with the approaches used and I was charged to communicate to the Chair of the Board that the PBG would appreciate advice about the decisions the Board had reached on the Green Paper 'before they are communicated more widely'. The Farm Consultancy Report was considered and five-year strategy with a one-year operational plans were agreed as the next step to accommodate the revised management structure proposed. The Residences Consultancy was similarly agreed to determine a means of managing on a more efficient basis. In terms of support for international research students, it was agreed that not less than \$3,500 per student per year be included in department budgets for competitive allocation to candidates' primary supervisor, with the PBG maintaining a watching brief over the approach. I maintained that such an approach discriminated against Australian postgraduate students, and while sympathetic to requests from academic staff for an incentive to accept international students, I withdrew my support unless the approach included all postgraduate students with the discretion of the Head of Department being exercised in terms of the need and the appropriate amount for each case; this was agreed.

At first meeting of 1999 on 12 February, I announced Professor Snow Barlow as the Foundation Chair in Food Production Horticulture, to commence during the month. I also advised that the Planning and Budget Committee of the University had agreed to meet \$2.8 million for the teaching and learning section of the ILFR deficit of 1998. A proposed change in the words for the Roper Bequest was endorsed. It was also agreed that 'the principle and approaches for the 1999 budget be endorsed, recognising that these are inappropriate for the longer term and that a deficit eradication plan needs to be established; that the proposals for IT development in 1999 be endorsed recognising that these developments do not include University requirements for the introduction of separate service for student and administrative needs and the Y2K fear; that a deficit eradication plan over a period of time negotiated with the University be developed and submitted to the March meeting of the PBG'. It was also agreed that a flow model of the financial implications of the new curriculum be conducted. By 1999, the Planning and Budget Group addressed management issues put before them while I and the whole of the Dean's Office became increasingly concerned at the effect of delays in implementing the Plan on the Faculty's debt, the difficulties of obtaining support for inevitable actions, and the usurpation of responsibilities by the Board without it having relevant expertise. Heads of Departments were determined in a somewhat ad hoc manner in late 1998 in this atmosphere of Board interference and politicking and Heads assumed their posts from the beginning of 1999.

The meeting of 12 March 1999 was brief in terms of planning and budget business as some of the group were more concerned over prerequisite subjects having been included in the curriculum proposal without wide discussion. PBG issues considered were; endorsement of final changes in the allocation of academic staff to departments, agreement on the establishment of four working parties to address means of reducing costs at Longerengong, Burnley, Parkville, and the Dean's Office. The meeting of 9 April 1999 agreed to the introduction of a quality management system, and to advancing marketing coordination, and if necessary engaging an external expert to market the new courses of the Institute once they were approved. I called a subsequent ad hoc meeting of PBG members to advise that he would step down as Dean; I would not be drawn on the reasons.

## **The Board**

The Board of the Institute of Land and Food Resources became involved in management from March 1998. This confusion resulted from two factors; ambiguities in the Regulation which established the Board, and the assumption of powers beyond the Regulation by members of the Board. The latter factor derived from apparent individual concerns of Board members about University actions that affected their own roles and interests; my naive assumption that members would act independently in a manner similar to a professional corporate board was categorically proven false. The Board's assumption of powers was a matter which increased the difficulty of managing the Faculty, although it was seen by some to have assisted the management of public relations – possibly following the dictum of P.T. Barnum that there is no such thing as bad publicity. This is discussed further in Chapter 11.

The Board's meddling in management increased with the concern of some members that their personal association with the Faculty would cause them political embarrassment considering the press coverage which the Faculty was attracting. Unfortunate confrontations occurred which increased divisions between individuals on the PBG. An outcome from these deliberations was the establishment of an Issues Committee by the Board, and it was this Committee which effectively proved to be the wedge by which the Board assumed management of critical areas of Faculty activity with the University's tacit approval. In expressing concern, I advised that I saw my responsibility to continue to follow the vision for a higher quality educational service, and that I would endeavour to do this before considering my future.

The Board had all but closed remaining opportunities to create a world-class faculty through its; preclusion of staff reductions, reticence to allow appointment of new Professors in key areas in accordance with the Strategic Plan, delaying of adjustments in expenditure which would allow a balanced budget, appointment of Departmental Heads to meet political objectives, and a reversal of a number of decisions of the PBG. That an external body, with powers limited and subject to the University, could so influence the University, required an opportunistic grasp of power, in this case through perceived State and Federal political connections, and the diversion of University management by other agenda. I was aware, as were other Deans, of Alan Gilbert's grand vision to acquire access to what is now known as University Square and in particular to have State Parliament pass legislation allowing the creation of Melbourne University Private; these made Alan vulnerable to those with political influence.

By early 1999, part of the budget deficit (\$2.8 million) from 1998 had been absorbed by the University, and a deficit of a further \$3.9 million for 1999 had been forecast. The Board's approach was to seek additional revenue, while management pushed for an analysis of individual site figures which indicated major deficits at Burnley, Longerenong, and Parkville as the allocation of income as WEFTSU. Through this mechanism it was hoped that the need to reduce staff in areas of low demand would be clear to the Board; overlapping skills as a function of the merger was well appreciated among staff as a result of the Strategic Planning process, which informed the strengthening of the Faculty through new appointments to areas of strategic strength. The Board disagreed with me, and I felt squeezed between responsible action and the Board's politics that were influencing the Vice Chancellor. Reducing capital and operational deficits were not possible without reducing campuses and staff numbers no matter how I looked at it, and my colleague working in more detail on the figures confirmed this.

By February 1999, I recognised that reinstatement of the plan to build a special and high quality educational institute was not likely to be possible according to my plan given the inertia-engendered demotivation of 1998, and politicisation of decision-making. Nevertheless, through those periods, a range of stratagems had been employed to ensure progress in changes to curricula. These were perhaps overly successful in terms of rhetoric because it caused the Board to develop an interest in academic matters, which encouraged some on the Board to interfere in higher education matters to claim it as a sign of their own activity. Students and course matters are outlined in the following chapter.

## Chapter 7

### Course and Students

#### Degree Courses

Attempts to integrate degree courses of the merged entities provided an insight into organizations with entrenched views of the product that society and clients require. Three attempts in four years allowed professional and, less than professional, views to be seen by most academics, leading to the far-reaching and controversial proposal to re-orient courses to the future needs of industry and the public. The principle had been agreed early in the Strategic process.

The first attempt followed the VCAH approach to plan courses through an activity entitled *Towards 2000*, which took place from August 1995 to March 1996 under the Chairpersonship of Ms Meg Probyn. The Committee was to review existing programs, identify unnecessary duplication of program content, and identify future programs. Key recommendations of the Committee were: that the Bachelor of Agricultural Science and the Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture) be supported by the Faculty as two distinct courses of study; that discipline groups be formed to examine subjects offered and make recommendations regarding the rationalisation of subjects, production of external teaching materials and strategies to improve the quality of teaching, that demand for higher education courses in agriculture be examined; that the marketing of programs be improved to increase the number of first preferences and to lift the tertiary entry scores of school leaver applicants, and that market research specifically for the Bachelor of Applied Science (Dairy Foods) should determine whether there is support for such a course. The report assisted the gathering of further information and, while not leading to change, served to heighten academic awareness of the need for change.

From November 1996 to August 1997, Professor David Connor led the Course Policy Committee which was charged with undertaking a complete review of the structure of undergraduate programs to meet emerging educational and employment objectives, to ensure complementarity of programs, to remove overlap, to improve quality, to extend and improve flexibility of delivery, to develop the multimedia capacity required for national and international recognition, and to contribute to the closer integration of activity across locations of the Institute. The recommendations of the Course Policy Committee were: that there should be two degree streams clearly differentiated by content and design towards educational objectives and target employment, with one degree stream focused on science and the other to have a greater focus on management; that the range of options available in the science-degree programs be expanded, initially to include Natural Resources and Horticulture, and following further investigation of opportunities and course design, Food science; that subjects must fit the standard multiples of 12.5 credit points; and that substantial common teaching should be developed between the management degree and associated higher education diploma courses.

### *A Fair Trial*

To consider a new curriculum seemed at first an affront to those who valued their own lectures highly, although some other motives also became clear with time. Cornford (1908) talks about the argument of the fair trial. This argument works particularly well for curriculum matters in faculties related to agriculture. It goes something like, *we shouldn't make any changes to the curriculum until we have given the current curriculum a fair trial*. It might also be paraphrased as *I don't intend to alter my lectures if I can help it and if you pass this proposal you will have to alter yours*. It is quite clear to see that a fair trial should only be given to systems that already exist, not to any proposed alternatives. Hence, some assistance to ensure that a new curriculum was considered in terms of student and society interests came from a less collegiate approach to decision-making.

While these two approaches did not lead to curriculum change, they encouraged debate that fostered mutual understanding if not acceptance of the recommendations. The first attempt was not sufficiently inclusive of senior academic staff and was conducted at a time when lines of authority were still separate. The second, which could have led to change was thwarted in the final stages, ostensibly as a result of differences between, in general, College and old Faculty staff, over all courses requiring a year away from the site of enrolment. However, the outputs of that process provided the basis for the next approach, which was a larger, and embracing activity.

The Coursework Programs Committee which led to the proposal considered by Faculty and the Academic Board of the University in 1999 and 2000, worked to Terms of Reference to recommend and advise on: the development and implementation of academic policy relating to coursework programs, including TAFE; development of new courses; changes to existing courses; course structure; course entrance requirements; subject changes; assessment; credit policy; schedule of dates; and setting of fee levels; quality assurance activities relating to coursework programs including regular evaluation of all courses; implement university policies on matters relating to coursework programs including responding to policy initiatives such as 'students at risk', student evaluation of teaching, progression rates, assessment, and equity issues; to oversee multimedia use and development in liaison with the Director Enterprise Development; and any other coursework matters. To carry out these activities, sub-committees were to be created to provide advice on individual course development, as directed by the Coursework Programs Committee. Students were to be represented on all committees. Membership of the Committee was; Professor Ellen Goddard (Chair), Ms Karen Gould (Secretary), Deputy Dean and Director of TAFE Mr Val Pollard, Professor David Chapman, Professor David Connor, Mr Max Coster, Mr Gavin Drew, Mr Chris Laird, Mr Alan Morgan, Dr Steve Read, Professor Robert White, Distance Education Representative Ms Jennifer Jackson, two undergraduate students, and one graduate (coursework) student.

In addition to a commitment to consult widely, the approach taken by the Committee was to conduct its business as publicly as possible. This was effected through the evolving proposal and associated background material being regularly updated on the internet. The

majority of the following to the end of this subsection is drawn verbatim from that public information of mid 1999.

“The amalgamation of the VCAH and the University of Melbourne provides the Institute of Land and Food Resources with a rare opportunity for a fresh look at its courses.

The Institute has been working for some time to develop a strong set of industry-based courses each of which is complete within itself, but all of which are tightly inter-related. The overriding aim is to allow students to pursue a self-determined mix of management, science and technical subjects that will fit them for a choice of careers.

These new courses are designed with a strong customer focus. We applied the following principles in designing the curriculum:

- The Institute, not any specific campus, is responsible and accountable for courses
- Efficient use is to be made of the facilities and resources at various Institute campuses. Options and opportunities available to students of rural or urban backgrounds are to be enhanced. Research nuclei are to be fostered at individual campuses
- Students should be able to study higher education subjects at a variety of campuses where subjects may be developed around areas of research specialisation. Degree/Advanced Diploma entry would be at more than one campus with common content and common assessment allowing students to move easily through the system in later years
- Consistent quality of delivery across the Institute.

Our intention is to provide excellence in every aspect of education relating to the agriculture, forestry, horticulture, food and natural resource industries. Our courses will offer maximum flexibility for students to tailor their education to meet their own specific professional goals, at every level from vocational training through to higher degrees. To compete successfully in employment, our students need an educational background that prepares them to handle changing careers within an increasingly complex world. Our graduates need to understand and be able to apply their knowledge to local and international problems with a strong underpinning of science, management *and* practical hands on experience.

In designing these courses we had in mind the comments of the Vice Chancellor, Prof Alan Gilbert [stimulated by the public concern described in Chapter 10] that: ‘none of the former VCAH colleges will be closed; there will be no reduction of the emphasis in the ILFR on TAFE programs in comparison with higher education programs; the educational and training programs of the ILFR will be designed and monitored in close liaison with rural communities and rural industry needs and, in particular, the type, range and location of higher education courses will not be varied except where advice has been received from the Board following extensive consultation with the communities and industries concerned; there will be no reduction in the foreseeable future in student numbers on rural campuses, despite the EFTSU loads cuts being absorbed in Parkville; there will be no net movement of staff from rural to urban campuses.’

### *A Noble Occupation*

Employment oriented courses easily evolve from once broadly based education when the external environment promotes jobs, incomes and advancement as primary social goals. Thus agriculture has slipped further down the popularity list for tertiary study until it is near the bottom. In a leading university, one can expect a broad education to be retained more than may be possible in other institutions, yet the pressures of accepting larger numbers of students and government funding arrangements will inevitably produce compromises which produce similar eventual outcomes. The loss of the centrality of agriculture in the understanding of students then causes a technical approach to be preferred as it suits today's job market. This is a far cry from early stages of social development. From Cicero's association of agriculture with appropriate utility of human life in ... *of all the things of which any gain is obtained there is nothing better than agriculture, nothing more productive, nothing sweeter, nothing more worthy of a man, or one who is free ...* a string of such sentiments have inspired those who work the land or are linked to it through support services and even education. Seeking an historical context causes us to repeat such words as those of Emerson, who said that ... *the first farmer was the first man, and all historic nobility rests on possession and use of land*. It is then but a small leap to claiming that the technological science of agriculture is as blessed and noble as farming itself once may have been. Yet, we neglect the encompassing assumptions of early observers who saw technology as but part of an approach, and inseparable from the whole if benefits were to be expected. Agriculture was, before our era, discussed as an art, not because of its mysteries but because it involved persons and their thoughts, beliefs, emotions and skills. Such a perspective gives deeper meaning to such aphorisms as that of Pliny the Elder, who observed that ... *our fathers used to say that the master's eye was the best fertiliser*. The essence is captured by Rousseau's ... *Le premier et le plus respectable de tous les arts est l'agriculture ...* and provides a glimpse of the relations between civilisation and agriculture. If agriculture allowed us to assume a reasonable security of food and comfort, we then were able to pursue wider artistic, spiritual and intellectual development. Ovid's reference to ... *peace [being] the nurse of Ceres, and Ceres [being] the foster-child of Peace ...* thus gains a mirror which reflects agriculture as a means of maintaining peace, both through its noble associations, and through its underpinning of the complex societies from which such human development occurs. If young graduates of agriculture have some of this perspective, we will have met a previously neglected responsibility of agricultural education. Of course, the trend is the opposite.

In every case the Institute is proposing courses that reflect the flavour and content of existing courses. A higher profile is being given to the area of viticulture. The area of food science and technology is not addressed further in this documentation since more distinct course structuring is being developed in that area (and existing courses are remaining for the time being). New combined degrees with Science are being proposed (and the proposals are currently with the Science Faculty). All higher education diploma offerings are to be configured as Advanced Diplomas. In total the Institute is only decreasing its course offerings by one.

During January and February, staff, working in teams provided subject outlines, giving details of prerequisites (where required), contact hours, subject objectives and content, assessment methods, required texts and mode/location of delivery. It resulted in a 210+ page document covering

Four undergraduate degrees:

- Bachelor of Agriculture,
- Bachelor of Forestry,
- Bachelor of Horticulture and
- Bachelor of Resource Management;

Six combined degrees:

- Bachelor of Agriculture/Bachelor of Science,
- Bachelor of Forestry/Bachelor of Science,
- Bachelor of Horticulture/Bachelor of Science,
- Bachelor of Resource Management/Bachelor of Science,
- Bachelor of Agriculture/Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Forestry/Bachelor of Commerce;

Five advanced diplomas in:

- Agriculture,
- Forestry,
- Horticulture,
- Resource Management
- Viticulture.

A hallmark of the new courses is their flexibility. Students will be able to put together a course of study using all the resources of ILFR, to meet their goals. The "single" degrees (Agriculture, Horticulture and Resource Management) are three years full-time study, with an additional honours year. The Forestry degree is four years for both pass and honours students. This proposal was debated at the Faculty meeting of 23rd February and there was unanimous support for the proposal.

This course proposal has been provided to the Faculty's shepherd. Each faculty has a shepherd, a senior member of academic staff from an unrelated faculty, who acts as an adviser on the preparation of proposals for course change, prior to University consideration of the proposal. Additional copies were sent to the Director of Information Technology Services and the Sciences Librarian for their statements-of-support. Further copies were given to the Deans of Engineering and Economics & Commerce and the Head of the Geography department as disciplines with an interest in our proposal. When the IT and library statements were obtained, three copies of the proposal were sent to the University's Academic Programs Committee which reviews faculty proposals prior to consideration by the University's Academic Board.



### *Human Agriculture*

While agricultural courses compete with those of science, there is a tendency to cram courses full of applied science to the exclusion of the humanities. Where agricultural courses exist in a university which has a strong science faculty, the variable popularity of agriculture can lead to its being seen as less worthy than that of applied science in a science faculty. With agriculture and its related sectors increasingly drawing its expertise from the range of faculties rather than calling at a faculty of agriculture in the first instance as might have once occurred, it appears impossible to compete with the specialists of other fields, including those of science. The unsung strength of agricultural courses has been their integrative nature to offer a problem-solving approach that applies the range of human knowledge to its field. Broadly based liberal arts courses can create educated persons who can take an educated approach to life and further study. How then could we responsibly reduce or even omit humanities subjects from an agricultural curriculum? Yet we have, in a range of circumstances and countries. It is for these and related reasons that I advocated the inclusion of more humanities subjects in agricultural courses. The graduate I envisaged is one who appreciates the environment as much more than an interaction of chemicals or as a resource, production from which must be sustained. We have taken away that awe, that spirit which is critical to true agricultural science by defining science too narrowly. Bulwer noticed this in broader societal terms when he wrote of Nature as ...

*a thing which science and art never appear to see with the same eyes.*

*If to an artist nature has a soul, why, so does a steam engine.*

*Art gifts with soul all matter that it contemplates;  
science turns all that is already gifted with soul into matter.*

But it is more than the techniques that are conferred in teaching the arts. It is the essence of humanities. Wordsworth considered the subject in 'The Tables Turned' where he wrote ...

*Our meddling intellect*

*Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: -*

*We murder and dissect. ....*

*Enough of Science and Art*

*Close up those barren leaves;*

*Come forth and bring with you a heart*

*That watches and receives ...*

as did the Japanese poet more pungently in Blyth's translation ...

*Tear open the tree!*

*And can you see*

*The cherry flowers that yearly*

*Bloom in Yoshino?*

Some further fine-tuning, input from the University and debate about year 12 prerequisite subjects took place at the ILFR Coursework Programs Committee (March 10th). The impetus was preparing text for the *VTAC Guide 2000* (VTAC is the Victorian Tertiary

Admissions Centre and the central application point for prospective students, with its *Guide* as a major source of information on courses). This resulted in the introduction of English and Maths Methods as Year 12 prerequisite subjects for the four degrees – a change from the past. Previously the Bachelor of Agricultural Science and Bachelor of Forest Science had English, Maths Methods and two of: Biology, Chemistry, additional Maths and Physics as prerequisites subjects; the Bachelor of Applied Science degrees (the VCAH courses) had no prerequisites.

This issue has generated a lot of discussion within ILFR. A pragmatic course has been taken in order to achieve the introduction of the new curriculum in 2000 [the deadline was not met], with an appropriate entry in the *Guide*, then prerequisites must be adopted to reshape the curriculum. This development is consistent with the overall direction set for the curriculum with industry. This change required a statement to be made about the courses for those students who had planned their year 11 and 12 studies with the earlier requirements in mind. This wording is still being finalised. As before, the Advanced Diplomas courses do not specify any particular year 12 subjects. In future the Advanced Diplomas offer an alternate entry path for students who have not studied the prerequisite subjects at year 12.”

These courses are administered by University Regulations and the draft Regulations covering the new and changed courses have been sent to the University Solicitor's Office. The Planning and Budgets Group has also established a working group to develop a plan for marketing the new courses.

The proposed suite of courses contrasted with the long list which came into new faculty:

#### **Combined Degrees**

Bachelor of Agricultural Science/Bachelor of Commerce

Bachelor of Forest Science/Bachelor of Commerce

Bachelor of Forest Science/Bachelor of Science

#### **Degrees**

Bachelor of Agricultural Science

Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture)

Bachelor of Forest Science

Bachelor of Applied Science (Horticulture)

Bachelor of Applied Science (Natural Resource Management)

Bachelor of Applied Science (Dairy Foods)

Bachelor of Applied Science (Food Technology)

Bachelor of Applied Science (Equine Management)

Bachelor of Applied Science (Rural Management)

no direct entry - articulates from diploma

#### **Advanced Diplomas and Diplomas**

Advanced Diploma of Applied Science (Farm Management)

Advanced Diploma of Applied Science (Farm Production)

Diploma of Applied Science (Agricultural Services)

Advanced Diploma of Applied Science (Horse Management)

Diploma of Forestry

Diploma of Applied Science (Horticulture)

The Faculty minutes of the first meeting of 1999 summarise the debate about the proposal as follows. There was discussion about the inclusion of Food Service as an additional degree stream. It was recognised that there was some commonality in the proposed degree and any Food Science degree but that there were tight time lines and that it was not possible to develop such a stream for commencement in 2000. It was noted that specialised processing based subjects "beyond the farm gate" such as Food Safety and Food Quality could be incorporated into the proposed Agriculture structure and subject entries for "food" subjects could be written. The suggestion was made that a stronger reference be made to Food Science in the proposal and the future developments in this field.

The deadline for getting an entry in the VTAC Guide 2000 was noted. It is proposed to provide VTAC with two entries; one for the new courses and one for the old and that the unnecessary courses will be deleted when the Guide is edited in May. The VTAC entry can reflect the breadth of subjects, including food science, within the degrees.

Course Advisory Committees were recognised as essential, but it was suggested that they be associated with a spectrum of interest, rather than a particular course. Further, it was noted that there will be a transitional period covering the time students' progress through the old courses, when the Course Advisory Committees will still have a role.

The names: Bachelor of Agriculture, Bachelor of Forestry, Bachelor of Horticulture, Bachelor of Resource Management were proposed. There were reports of regret at the dropping of the word "Science" and the feeling that science had been somehow lost in the new courses; though it was recognised that there is a double degree, combined with Science and the opportunity to do a fourth year (honours) which should be science based. There was some discussion about whether prospective students were attracted to the word "science" or not. Some felt that the inclusion of the word 'science' indicated an area that had solutions to problems. Others felt the need to be seen to be offering courses that differ from those the past. It was mentioned that there had been a long-term decline in the previous courses and that a new name offered the opportunity for an invigorated marketing effort.

There was discussion about the proposed length of the degree courses. It is suggested that the Bachelor of Agriculture, Bachelor of Horticulture and Bachelor of Resource Management be three years with an additional honours year. Bachelor of Forestry is to be four years at either pass or honours level. This reduction in the length of some courses has implications on the students' liability under the still new HECS scheme which impacted demand, as well the Institute's student load and ongoing recruitment of students.

There was some discussion about the omission of the word "satural" from the title. It was seen as making the course broader, but it was recognised that there may be some opposition from others in the university, who also see themselves as offering degrees in resource management.

There was the suggestion that combined degrees with Arts also be considered. It was mentioned that the new flexible arrangements will allow more city-based students to study the concurrent diplomas, including the Diploma of Modern Languages.

It was noted that under the proposal all diplomas and advanced diplomas would be termed "Advanced Diploma". There was some discussion as to whether the Faculty should offer five Advanced Diplomas (in Agriculture, Equine Management, Forestry, Horticulture and Viticulture) with specialisations or sixteen. The higher number representing each specialisation having its own title (Agricultural Services, Arboriculture, Crop Management, Dairy Management, Farm Management, Farm Production, International Agribusiness, Landscape, Nursery, Parks and Gardens, Production Horticulture, Turf, Wool and Pasture Systems as well as Equine Management, Forestry and Viticulture). There were cases put for some specialisations to have their own title, but it was generally recognised as a better option to have fewer course names rather. The continued value placed on articulation between advanced diplomas and degrees was noted.

I emphasised the importance of the discussion and insisted in prolonging the debate to bring out all matters including those of absent persons. It was noted that there were some misgivings about aspects of the proposal and that staff needed to be kept informed. The updating of the web version and the monitoring of the courses would help alleviate some of these concerns.

Faculty then endorsed the proposal unanimously, with none present abstaining.

## **TAFE**

Considerable work was done in 1998 to establish a Strategic Plan for VET under the guidance of Deputy Dean (VET) Val Pollard. In 1999 this was to be extended to the development of Operational and Business Plans for the major areas which make up ILFR's VET function:

- Formal training programs, in particular, training based on Training Packages and leading to national qualifications
- Short courses – training customised to the needs of client groups. This may or may not be aligned with units of competency from Training Packages
- VET and New Apprenticeships in Schools
- Assessment only
- Recognition of Prior Learning and Recognition of Current Competency assessments.
- Those being assessed may or may not proceed to formal training
- Training design and development consultancy.

Operational and Business Plans were within the framework of departmental structures, and some of the business areas were under the umbrella of ILFR Services Ltd. The continued non-eligibility for TAFE capital equipment grants inherited from the formation of VCAH more than 15 years earlier, was again raised with the State Office of Technical and Further Education. ILFR remained ineligible for capital funding because for capital purposes only,

it was regarded by OTFE as a private provider. However other private providers such as Skills Centres were eligible, and for all other funding purposes, including student numbers, building maintenance, Commonwealth equipment grants and participation in the TAFE Virtual Campus, ILFR was regarded as a TAFE Institute.

## **Students**

The university periodically sought the opinions of undergraduate and postgraduate students on the quality and effectiveness of the administrative services provided by departments, faculties and student administration. The survey also sought feedback on satisfaction with academic and support services such as the library, computing facilities, student health and welfare services. During 1998 students located at campuses other than Parkville were surveyed for the first time. The specific areas included in the questionnaire were: enrolment processes, examination arrangements, the internet, Student Information System, telephone Interactive Voice Response system, course administration, library services, computing facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, and other support services such as health and counselling.

Results included general satisfaction with the competence, efficiency and promptness of administrative staff although responses varied between campuses, particularly from part-time students. On the whole respondents appeared to be reasonably satisfied with course administration at the colleges. Students also expressed satisfaction with staff competence and expertise and with the promptness of the responses received to queries. Easier access to undergraduate handbooks was considered an area that could be improved. Overall satisfaction with campus-based computing facilities was low for almost all locations. High levels of dissatisfaction were expressed from students at every campus regarding the reliability and condition of equipment.

Common complaints were: that the computers were unreliable and slow; out of date software; inadequate number of printers, and the inability to access the internet. Students, at almost every campus, strongly believed that the hours of opening of the computer laboratories should be extended. Responses showed high levels of satisfaction with library staff competence and expertise, and with the promptness of service; students at most campuses expressed dissatisfaction with the restricted library opening hours. It was suggested that libraries open before classes start at 9.00, be open some evenings and during the weekend. Part-time students in particular believed that the limited opening hours were not conducive to effective study. Students were concerned with the availability of current library resources and equipment. Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction in regard to examination arrangements.

The flavour of student comments was expected and highlighted the declining levels of service necessitated by the high cost multi-campus and duplicative course arrangements inherited by merger. The coursework revisions aimed to rationalise offerings around geographical strengths of colleges and to thereby reduce duplication, while other proposals aimed to increase the quality of all services by addressing student and other client needs as a priority using, readily available technologies which could produce savings.

Overall curriculum changes suffered from initial intransigence of academic staff and some protection of individuals' employment. Once the process was raised above such factors through an embracing and public approach, some lost ground was regained. However, the changes gradually became interpreted, with Board intervention, as necessary to attract more students, whereas the initial philosophical impetus derived from a wide perspective of serving agricultural sectors more efficiently from the whole University. It also assumed that the University of Melbourne was able to make such changes from its position of dominance in the sector in Victoria, and its national reputation. Changes were eventually agreed, and their implementation after 2000 continued to require constant modification, as was foreseen and as befits an evolving faculty in a changing agricultural sector that increasingly sources graduates from non-agricultural faculties.

Consistent with these curriculum changes and improvements in student services, marketing and recognition of activities, which should be improved by commercial efficiencies, were introduced as detailed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 8

### Marketing and Enterprise

The concept of corporate marketing was introduced from 1995. Outcomes are described in the following sections, together with a similar innovation in commercial activity as a bona fide function requiring non-academic management. My own view of marketing as essential in modern society so long as it is truthful and offers information and services to assist students make their decision was shared by all concerned and produced remarkable results from a small budget.

Established publicly-funded services institutions run the risk of basing decisions on the best intentions and devices of their staff without real reference to their clients. Over seven centuries that universities have shown an ability to survive, adaptation seems most closely related to changing funding bases and modes of delivery. Notwithstanding this observation, applied fields in universities are at risk of believing that their staff are sufficiently in contact with clients to plan required changes in the educational products offered. This may not be the case; for example, even the best external contacts may at times be more focused on the short term when the educational product of universities in the form of three or more year degree courses requires a focus on a time frame in which graduates study and establish themselves, possibly ten years in total. In agriculture and related fields, there is a need to update products to today's needs while planning for that decadal future. For these and other reasons, ILFR conducted its own marketing research, with the assistance of external consultants, and research students and assistants.

#### The Market Place

**Students:** Student perceptions of agricultural careers were elicited by surveying the knowledge and perceptions of metropolitan and non-metropolitan Year 10 students in Victoria concerning careers in agricultural and environmental fields in ILFR instigated marketing research (Matthews and Falvey, 1999), parts of which are reproduced in this subsection. A survey of 500 Year 10 students was undertaken to determine factors involved in decision making about careers by high school students, the knowledge of such students about careers available in agricultural science; and whether the perceptions of students about agriculture affect enrolments. It was found that the most important influence on student knowledge about agricultural careers came from parents, school, and the media; that overall student knowledge of the various careers available to graduates of agricultural science was limited, and, where such knowledge existed, it was biased by misconceptions of the role and activities of agricultural scientists. Furthermore, students were interested in high paying careers, yet did not consider that agriculture offered these.

The number of students enrolling in agricultural and related tertiary courses in Australia has increased in recent years. The percentage growth in graduates in agriculture from 1981-1990 was 40 per cent; however, in comparison, the increase in areas such as health, business and economics, and law were over 100 per cent (Elliot, 1995). The number of students choosing agriculture as their first preference has decreased over this same time

(VTAC, 1996). Falling numbers of students with high academic results has seen institutions reduce their minimum entry scores in order to attract sufficient student numbers (McColl, 1991; Moneith and Field, 1995). Negative community attitudes concerning agriculture's effect on the environment are also considered to be one of the influences on the number of students opting to study agriculture and related areas (Monteith and Field, 1995; Wilkins, 1995).

Global trends, for example, in the USA indicate that the public image of agriculture is one of farming (Meyer, 1992) which is seen as destructive of the natural environment. In Australia, the negative image of agriculture held by the largely urban-based community is reflected in the general press (Monteith and Field, 1995) in the form of floods, drought, and bankruptcy (Wilkins, 1995). According to many connected with agriculture and related areas, a common perception amongst the public at large is that agricultural and related education is a training ground for individuals who, by working in agriculture, are somehow likely to have negative impacts on the environment.

The media portrayal of an embattled farmer media affected by remediation of salination and stream eutrophication aim to create a sympathetic view towards farmers. However, they do not display agriculture as being a dynamic, socially and environmentally responsible, profitable industry. The opinions of students toward agriculture are influenced by negative media coverage (Mallory and Sommer, 1986).

In a survey of Western Australian university student choices, agriculture was ranked below engineering, economics, environmental science, and science in terms of perceived job prospects, and nearly 80 per cent of students had not considered agriculture as a field of study (UWA, 1996). A related study indicated that, while students claimed they chose university courses on the basis of career prospects, academic results, interest, prerequisites and flexibility, their school teachers believed that a student's academic score was the primary determinant of their course of study.

By way of contrast, a study of school students in Canberra conducted as a comparison with USA secondary students indicated that negative perceptions of agriculture were less prevalent in the Canberra sample (Mallory and Sommer, 1986). Canberra students taking agricultural courses in Years 9 and 10 showed a higher interest in agricultural careers than their peers in schools without such programs. The study accordingly recommended more agricultural programs in later high school years, improved media presentations of agriculture and careers, greater student contact with agriculture, and a focus on students before Year 11 (Cecchetti, Sommer and Leising, 1991). A study of new entrants to ILFR courses related to agriculture, forestry and natural resource management also suggested that the reputation of the institution exceeds the importance of course content in student choice (Loquet, 1996).

One study, which investigated student perceptions and factors influencing career choice at Year 10 level (Matthews and Falvey, 1999), indicated the need for an integrated educational approach to marketing. Of the students surveyed, 57 per cent stated that their knowledge of agriculture came from teachers, followed by parents and relatives (52 per



cent), media (46 per cent), and friends (27 per cent). The internet (3.6 per cent) was found to be the least contributing factor. Significantly more students in non-metropolitan regions gained their knowledge from parents (65 per cent) rather than schools (51 per cent). In comparison, students in metropolitan regions gained their knowledge of careers in agriculture from school (61 per cent), media (47 per cent) and lastly from parents (43 per cent).

Factors regarded by a majority of students as being important in choosing a career were respectively: interesting work; good income; opportunities for advancement; work location; job prospects; social responsibility and the prospective growth of the industry. Students from metropolitan areas ranked good income above interesting work, while non-metropolitan students placed job prospects equally with opportunities for advancement and above work location.

Factors seen as applying to a career in agriculture were (in decreasing order of frequency): conservation/environmental concerns; interesting work; work location; prospective growth of industry; opportunities for advancement; job prospects; good income; social responsibility, and helping those in less developed countries. A greater number of students in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions thought that family approval did not apply or were uncertain about whether it applied to a career in agriculture. More students from non-metropolitan regions ranked family approval as applying to a career in agriculture, compared with metropolitan students, however this was not significant. Significantly less metropolitan students ranked job prospects as applying to a career in agriculture compared with non-metropolitan students. When placing the factors in order of relevance to a career in agriculture, metropolitan students differed from non-metropolitan students in rating social responsibility above job prospects and a good income.

The sources from which Year 10 Victorian students learned about careers requiring tertiary study were largely consistent with findings in the USA (Lam, 1982; Martin, 1985; Kotrlik, 1987). If students do possess a negative image of agriculture, it may also be associated with the sources of information about careers in agriculture. This suggested that parents, school and the media could be viewed as potential foci for agricultural educators and industry in improving the image of agriculture. The potential value of presenting a different balance of negative and positive media images of agriculture is reflected in the high numbers of students influenced by this source.

Attracting high achievers to agricultural and related courses therefore appears to be constrained by students' knowledge of careers in agriculture. Students in a closer proximity to agriculture were more likely to consider a career in agriculture, although both metropolitan and non-metropolitan students related the study of agriculture mainly to farming. The reduced contact of city dwellers with rural areas probably means that opinions are oriented to past practices in farming. There was seen to be a need to portray agriculture as a developing industry that plays a role in everyday life and offers exciting and rewarding careers.

**Careers:** The perceptions of stakeholders, such as research funders, research providers, educators, and agricultural producers, were surveyed in a separate study to elicit their views on the needs of agricultural education (Falvey and Matthews, 1999), parts of which are reproduced in this subsection. Information was gathered concerning the missions, challenges and likely major changes facing universities and state government agencies associated with agriculture over the next decade. An overriding focus on environmental management and sustainability was evident in answers with a need for closer interaction between providers of education and research and users of knowledge, particularly agricultural producers. Attracting high-performing students to fields servicing agriculture, and integrating agricultural and environmental knowledge, were highlighted as particular needs. It was concluded that existing provision of educational services is failing to meet expectations of producers in terms of information delivery, creation of attractive learning environments, and involvement of stakeholders in decision-making. An education and research provider partnership with industry was seen as a logical outcome of current debates.

Social and demographic changes in Australian society may have also influenced changes in attitudes of the general population towards agriculture. The effect of goldmining in the latter half of the 19th century that supported towns in inland Australia has been largely lost, causing a drift to a predominantly urban population (Lees, Da Roza and Carey, 1982). In 1921, the proportion of the Australian population living in metropolitan areas was 43 per cent, other urban areas it was 20 per cent and 37 per cent in rural areas. In 1976, the proportions were 65, 21 and 14 per cent respectively (OECD, 1987). With the greater proportion of the population living in metropolitan areas, there is less general empathy and a rising level of ignorance about rural life and agriculture.

Industry and educators have expressed concern at the low proportion of the agricultural workforce that is tertiary qualified (Ferguson and Simpson, 1995; Kilpatrick, 1996). One survey found that the costs involved with living away from home, lower parental income, and inconsistencies of government subsidies based on asset testing were the main reasons restricting young farmers from engaging in further studies (Dent, 1995). Another survey of young farmers, determined that the decrease in number of young farmers undertaking tertiary study was due in most cases to their preferring to enter the workforce. Other farmers thought that tertiary study was not necessary to be a 'good farmer' (Hamilton, 1995). Farmer clients of consultants had tertiary qualifications in 43 per cent of cases, compared to 16 per cent for all farm operators (Hamilton, 1995). Surveys of Tasmanian farmers found a significant correlation between attendance at structured courses and farm cash operating surplus, which confirmed earlier findings that most farmers believe that further education leads to, improved farm business management (Kilpatrick, 1996). A more educated and trained workforce may be better equipped to address issues such as environmental problems and may in the long run present a more positive picture of agriculture to the rest of the community (Dunn, 1990). However, Australian farmers have traditionally placed little importance on formal tertiary education (Bell and Pandey, 1987).

The need for courses to be both relevant to industry needs and accessible is widely recognised. Some suggest that employers need to be directly involved in the development

of curricula (Lees et al., 1982). According to McColl, Robson and Chudleigh, (1991), attributes sought by private sector employers include the ability to work in a team situation, think critically and conceptually, communicate effectively, and plan and manage time. Other attributes sought by employers include problem solving, flexibility, entrepreneurship, interpersonal skills, loyalty, integrity, and lateral thinking (Anderson, 1994). According to Derera, (1994), specialisation in courses is viewed as a necessary component for Australia to be internationally competitive, but at the undergraduate level there is a need for generalist teaching to ensure a strong knowledge base. McColl et al (1991) determined that while there was some specialisation in agricultural science, courses overall provided opportunities to develop knowledge in other areas. Nevertheless, they reported shortages of graduates with specific training in soil science, production horticulture, agricultural economics, and food science and technology. Community concerns included the environment, product quality, chemical residues, and food safety (McColl et al., 1991), as well as animal welfare, biotechnology, and rural infrastructure decline (Wilkins, 1995).

Various analyses of agricultural education in the USA provided indications of issues which may be of relevance to Australia insofar as cultural similarities allowed further comparisons. Issues elicited from concurrent USA studies included the need for a focus on customer needs; increased linkages with industry; formation of partnerships among government, industry, and the general public; the need to meet demand for lifelong learning in the general public and for upgrading in industry; creating greater community awareness of agriculture; and decreasing the gap between rural and urban understanding (NRC, 1995, 1996(a), 1996(b); WK Kellogg Foundation, 1994; Dillman et al., 1995; CAST, 1996; NASULGC, 1996; RMF, 1995; NCAE, 1997). The need for closer involvement of stakeholders from industry, government, and the public in planning and delivery of agricultural education echoes opinions and anecdotal studies in Australia.

ILFR market research (Falvey and Matthews, 1999) generally supported USA findings and indicated a stakeholder preference for increased environmental emphasis in agricultural courses, the attraction of higher performing student profile, and greater links between industry and educational institutions. The student perceptions of agriculture as elicited from the market research detailed earlier appears to be inconsistent with these stakeholder preferences; neither group seemed to feel that existing courses met their perceived needs.

**Market Indicators:** The primary indicator of popularity for university courses among school leavers is cut-off entry scores of those accepted into a course. In the case of ILFR courses, the declining pool of applicants is indicated from the low (for the University of Melbourne) entrance scores and a general decline over recent years, a trend evidenced in most other countries.

Course	Campus	94/95 TER	95/96 TER	96/97 TER	97/98 TER ( <i>enter</i> )	98/99 ENTER
B Agr Sc	Parkville	71.35	70.75	64.35	66.00 (76.75)	73.95
B Agr Sc/B Comm	Parkville	90.05	88.25	86.90	90.25 (93.45)	95.05
B For Sc	P'ville/Cres	76.55	74.95	68.45	64.00 (75.30)	71.40

B For Sc/B Sc	Parkville	90.05	86.60	76.10	80.00 (91.90)	I
B For Sc/B Comm	Parkville	90.05	90.50	88.15	93.35 (95.55)	I
Dip Forestry	Creswick	(not offered)	55.65	46.75	41.40 (58.50)	I
BAS Horticulture	Burnley	72.05	66.80	60.65	60.10 (72.50)	I
Dip Hort	Burnley	63.00	58.40	45.00	54.55 (68.45)	I
BAS Agriculture	Dookie	34.05	32.05	38.85	39.80 (57.20)	I
BAS Agribusiness	Dookie	(not offered)	(not offered)	38.20	40.35 (57.65)	Not offered
BAS Prod'n Hort	Dookie	(not offered)	(not offered)	40.10	39.80 (57.20)	Not offered
BAS NRM	Dookie	(not offered)	(not offered)	39.55	39.25 (56.75)	I
AdvDipFarmMan	Glenormiston	Indiv Offer	68.85	65.15	30.70 (49.65)	I
AdvDipHorseMan	Glenormiston	Indiv Offer	29.90	30.85	29.40 (48.55)	I
AdvDipFarmProd	Longerenong	Indiv Offer	1.35	10.40	18.80 (38.45)	I
Dip Ag Services	Longerenong	Indiv Offer	Indiv Offer	19.15	19.30 (39.00)	I

I = not sole criteria, eg. interview used

From these studies conducted during the processes of planning and implementation, confidence in the Strategic Plan and in the revising curricula grew, and the need for improved marketing was recognised. A position of Marketing Manager was created which raised the profile of the ILFR and the field significantly.

## Marketing Activities

Creation of an integrated marketing activity allowed the disparate activities across colleges and departments to be coordinated and, through that process, to create a corporate marketing approach. Specific activities included a branding campaign utilising a creative image initiated early in 1998 and involving all mainstream media and schools. ILFR was in the fortunate position of having the services and expertise of a schools' liaison professional who complemented the University's school liaison team. The Institute created a new text logo for use on printed material with the University logo where appropriate, and ILFR stationery was standardised.

A suite of brochures was developed with a common layout style to cover national undergraduate, TAFE, international postgraduate, international scholarship and consultative research projects, course outlines and career guides. A Newsletter was first published in August 1998 with three editions targeting industry and alumni each year; 11,000 postcards were distributed at Victorian and border cafes, restaurants, cinema and theatres. Part of the timed awareness campaign utilising cinema advertising, press, poster, postcard and print advertising portrayed the environmental role of agriculture in the symbol of a frog. End of year acknowledgment and thank you cards to stakeholders and industry were produced and used to effect, as were 1999 calendars.

A 56 cinema advertising campaign began May 1998 in Wagga, Wonthaggi, Cowes, Werribee, Northland, Chadstone and Wangaratta cinema complexes through pre-show screen advertisements.

Negotiations with the university advertising office produced a template for regional campus use in local papers. This improved the quality of advertising in local papers while maintaining the lower costs of local papers. Advertisements appeared in all major national

and Victorian print publications. Specific course advertising remained chiefly in the domain of the campuses with ILFR-wide advertising being generated through the University Advertising Office. Specific campaigns were conducted for campus open days, Parkville's Discovery Day, Course Information Days, Change of Preference period, industry and research scholarships, and the Royal Agricultural Show. All campuses were encouraged to participate in the Parkville campus Discovery Day to great effect. A professional academic counselling service was introduced with undergraduate and postgraduate student participation. From 1998 the *Land & Food* newsletter was distributed to 5,000 current alumni and new graduates. Alumni received invitations to lectures and information relevant to any changes occurring within ILFR.

Special events were run to raise the ILFR profile including: Siemen's Science School host; Parent's Orientation Program; invitations to Agriculture and Horticulture teachers to attend a Discovery Day function; inclusion within the University's *CV News* – student vox pops; Careers Teachers Seminar; Dean's Awards function, and a Rural Press Club luncheon.

Schools liaison activities in 1998 included: visiting of over 70 schools; inclusion of ILFR within the Tertiary Information Service with visits to all Victorian and metropolitan sites, support *Paddock to Plate* promotion of careers in agricultural industry, attendance at Country Living Show, Rural Women's Day and Rural Press Club lunches, media coverage of Rural Finance Scholarship winners, participation of the Scholarships Officer (Dookie based *Country News* award), attendance at the Flower and Garden Show by Burnley campus, and participation with the Australian Women's Expo.

The www homepage included: information about all departments and campuses with an overview of aims, discipline areas, locations and contacts. The University of Melbourne homepage search engine was installed on the Faculty homepage to access courses and departments in the undergraduate handbook. ILFR advertised in trade publications and contributed editorial as appropriate. Journals included those of the VFF, the Australian Government Directory, Winetitles Australia, Grapepower and Winemaker and Good Fruit and Vegetables.

A selection of promotional gifts was produced for presentation to selected visitors; these include the book I had pulled together with Barrie Bardsley to facilitate the merger *Land and Food*, bookmarks, business card holders, mugs, pens, copyholders, coasters and letter openers. Handmade plates, incorporating the ILFR and University of Melbourne logos were manufactured for very special guests.

Public lectures by Meigunyah Fellows and new professional staff attracted stakeholder interest as did the Dean's Lectures Series, which was changed in 1995 to bring high profile and at times controversial speakers to the university.

The Dean's lecture series provide a showcase for the faculty through broader subjects than had been traditional. Selected speakers and topics are presented below. Honorary Doctorate recipients and Meigunyah Fellows also presented public lectures as detailed in the following chapter. Transcripts were provided to stakeholders unable to attend to widen

the message of ILFR. Inaugural Professional Lectures also included wide public profiles and covered such subjects as; global food and environmental trade-offs, new pasture ecological understanding, cheese microbiology, and agricultural education.

Phil Ruthven	Executive Chairman IBIS Business Information	Revolution for Australia's Primary Industry in the Twenty-first Century	November 1995
Neil Clark	Farm 500 Consultant	Sustainability of Farming Families	March 1996
Celie Moar	ABC Radio Victorian Rural Woman of the Year	A Princess on the Tractor	July 1996
Prof Gus Hooke	Economist and Vice Chancellor of a private university	The Long Term Outlook for Australian Agriculture	November 1996
Dr Keith Steele	Chief Scientist DNRE	Enhancing Food Exports	March 1996
Dr Jim Peacock	Chief of CSIRO Plan Industry	Biotechnology in Agriculture – Is it Really Necessary	July 1997
Julian Cribb	Director, National Awareness CSIRO	Agriculture: a new role in the human destiny	September 1998
Peter Doherty	Nobel Laureate	Research Feeds the World	August 1999

The last of these, a lecture by Nobel Laureate Prof. Peter Doherty was to be a major event. It grew from my approaching him in Washington DC at the World Bank in October 1998 after he had presented the Sir John Crawford Memorial Lecture. We were to conduct it as a joint activity with the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research to engage a wide public and to use it to both raise the profile of ILFR and to promote internal awareness of the global context of ILFR's activities. However, I departed the role in May 1998 and the intent of the Lecture was lost and it became little more than one more lecture in the Faculty, albeit by a very notable scientist. A minor matter but the only one that caused me to break my self-imposed rule to avoid interference with faculty management after resigning as Dean. I recall sending emails once I saw the mundane advertising and approach that ignored the benefit of building on the international activities of CGIAR, Crawford and the World Bank. Instead the Faculty became focussed on domestic producers, with the attendant perennial risk of being held back by less productive yet politically active farmers.

### **Commercial Enterprise Activity**

The corporate plan included a commitment to create further income from external sources. The vehicle for this included the company owned by the Faculty, and a senior portfolio styled as Director Enterprise Development, filled by Nigel Wood who drafted the following summary. The enterprise development task involved developing new education, training, research business; forging new strategic partnerships; financing strategic infrastructure development; organizational change; attitudinal change; and 'friendraising'. Over time, development of an enterprise was to become an embedded task for all who worked within the Institute.

The frameworks for enterprise development were the University and ILFR Strategic Plans, which focus on: internationalisation, partial privatisation, deregulation, competition, equity and access, and new teaching and learning technologies.

**Internationalisation:** The strategy adopted to increased international undergraduate enrolment at ILFR aimed to; establish a Victorian-linked senior secondary qualification overseas to channel students to Victoria in general and to ILFR in particular, establish a foundation studies program which included studies relevant to ILFR courses, and offer first year programs abroad, then articulate students giving advanced standing entry into the second year of ILFR undergraduate programs.

The Asian political and economic crisis dampened demand for expensive undergraduate study in North America and Europe, making Australia a relatively more attractive study destination. Cost pressures also meant that prospective students and their parents are looking to undertake a greater proportion of senior secondary and undergraduate study in their home country. Early in 1999, ILFR through Wood was instrumental in introducing the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) to the Sekolah Global Jaya, a leading Jakarta private secondary school; five per cent of that graduating class would meet ILFR's fee paying target figure. Establishing an "in country" foundation studies program and/or a Jakarta based first year studies program was similarly investigated.

Internationalisation was expanded to be more than simply the recruitment of fee-paying international students, to involve the exposing of Australian students to international study and research environments, and other means of expanding the international dimension to domestic study. New initiatives arising from enterprise development activities included;

- An active link with Cornell University and its Global Classroom Program was established as a "for credit" subject offered electronically in conjunction with Wageningen and the Open University of the Netherlands; Zamorana (Honduras); EARTH (Costa Rica); Uppsala and the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. ILFR was positioned to become the Asia-Pacific hub for this program as it expands and to link the program into Australian secondary schools on a revenue (and prospective student) generating basis.
- The development of overseas summer terms was undertaken such as for ILFR forestry students also currently lack exposure to tropical forest environments, through a potential partnership with Indonesia's Gadjah Mada University. The possibility of similar programs in food science or agribusiness was also explored with Institut Pertanian Bogor.
- In the postgraduate area, through linkages forged with other University faculties such as Law (in environmental education) and Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (for nurse education including nutrition and community development) tenders were prepared for large World Bank education contracts. These projects generally involved contracting to deliver Masters level programs in Australia for groups of 40 or more students at full fee rates.
- The facilitation of "one off" training programs in countries in the region was successful through training contracts in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

Much of the development work in Indonesia was undertaken at no cost to ILFR as self-funding consultancies were undertaken by the Director Enterprise Development covered costs and facilitated contacts with World Bank, AusAID and other agencies.

**Partial privatisation, deregulation and competition:** Activity in this area concentrated on establishing more effective mechanisms to capture the benefits of ILFR intellectual property, and making more financially rewarding use of existing ILFR assets. Considerable effort was spent on retaining the former VCAH's associated services and consulting company, which while not yet producing strong financial returns, remained a useful vehicle for entrepreneurial purposes.

While individual ILFR staff have secured some training contracts from time to time, no systematic and appropriately resourced and structured vehicle had been available to offer a coherent suite of award and non-award programs. With an ILFR-wide quality management system in place, a professional, commercial training services operation within ILFR was planned to encompass training needs assessment, design, development and delivery services to external clients, within a professional consultancy service.

Establishing of new farm enterprises such as commercial vineyards or tree plantations, proved valuable ideas for forging new links with industry, clarifying potential new research and teaching projects and reassessing the state of some ILFR assets. Attempts to secure financial backing for proposals of this kind were undermined by governance issues.

**Equity and access:** Access to ILFR programs expanded through the development of alliances with: the Victorian Rural Women's Network, professional organizations (such as AIAST & the Agribusiness Association), and peak industry bodies with a view to establishing on-line educational services. Equity of access was addressed through the offering of a number of new domestic and international scholarships. ILFR began to significantly complement its metropolitan and rural campus network through the provision of new electronic programs which afford access to those otherwise unable to attend a campus. New education and training partnerships with individual firms widened access to ILFR award and non-award courses to those currently in the workplace.

**New Teaching and Learning Technologies:** Through the merger, the Institute became a substantial provider of distance education. ILFR made a major investment in the new learning technologies and attracted significant external funding to support such developments;

- becoming the first international member of the USA based A\*DEC Consortium of leading universities offering agricultural and related studies,
- hosting an international distance educator, to develop a multimedia strategy for ILFR and strategic partners, funded by the University,
- attracting funding for multimedia including single subject development, whole course development, special short courses and specific modules by CD-Rom and internet,
- development the first electronic Master of Agribusiness and Master of Forestry programs in the region,



- forging a partnership with two other *Universitas 21* universities, the University of British Columbia (Canada) and University of Queensland to develop a number of common undergraduate subjects
- developing a business case for external funding support for technological infrastructure for the Institute's campuses.

Progress to better position ILFR to meet clients' needs is indicated by the introduction of embracing new learning technologies, staff support for new education, training and consultancy business, and enhanced student learning resources. Enterprise development was a continuing need seen for a vibrant faculty, and ultimately should be recognised as a responsibility of most staff.

**Land and Food Services Limited:** The company Land and Food Services Limited originated as VCAH Services Limited. Established in the late 1980s following the trend of educational institutions to establish private companies, the company differed from those in other institutions in two important ways. It was successful in extricating the College of VCAH from a major financial and reputation threat associated with private finance raising company for a cut flower project partly involving Longerenong College. It also varied from other institutions in the very nature of its external directors. Chaired by businessman, analyst and journalist Mr John Gilmore, the organization maintained the highest levels of integrity and professionalism combined with the insightful marketing and negotiating expertise of Mr Jim Wood, and the legal acumen of Mr Murray Chessell. Mr Jim Lonsdale, a past principal of Longerenong provided part-time management support and in particular oversaw the regular Burnley Summer School for gardeners, oversees consulting contracts, and attracting government funded contractual activities. The primary focus of decision making of the company was the welfare of students and accessing resources and scholarships in that interest. With the creation of the ILFR and its Board, the concept of a separate company was endorsed and I devised a means for its reporting to the ILFR Board. Despite the special relationships and potential of the company in the new environment being created by implementation of the Strategic Plan, the ILFR Board's actions had led to resignation of the company's three valued external directors by March 1999.

The introduction of the corporate areas of marketing and enterprise development into the Faculty facilitated its evolution toward an integrated provider using the technology of the era to meet client needs, although both areas required continuing nurturing by management to service budget cuts. At the same time enhancement of the critical areas of research and international activity, quality and income was being addressed, as detailed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 9

### Research and Internationalisation

Research and internationalisation formed two of the pillars of the University's Strategic Plan critical to the Faculty's enhancement of its position to be leading agricultural educator. Within ILFR, research assumed an ambiguous role as it tended to separate College from University staff. The merger caused some unprepared staff being surprised and disappointed about its competitive nature. Accordingly, seed funds to assist college staff gain research experience and hence credibility were created, with some success. However, the larger challenge of expanding the portfolio of research projects, with associated income, was the field that demonstrated the major success over the period 1995 to 1999. Internationalisation of the professoriate, the curriculum, the student profile, research, and other staff activities laid foundations, albeit among a small proportion of the Faculty, for progressively raising the international profile and activities of the Faculty, but capitalizing of it relied on follow-up that faltered with Board confusions in 1998.

#### Research

Research was critical in the plans of both ILFR and the University. Within the University's plan, improved research performance was a major strategy; for ILFR, developing further research relating to the agriculture, food, forestry, horticulture, and natural resource management fields was a challenge during the period of merger, and in consolidating the benefits that accrued from merger since mid 1997. The following report, compiled with assistance from Associate Dean (Research, Postgraduate and Scholarships) Professor Adrian Egan, provides a summary of achievements in the critical areas relating to research; infrastructure; operating income; alliances; postgraduate students; and interdisciplinary programs.

**New Research Infrastructure: Buildings, Facilities and Major Equipment:** The nature of funding of research in universities required that adequate facilities in the form of buildings and major equipment were in place in order to attract and efficiently utilise research operating income. ILFR focused on attracting Australian Research Council and other funding for major equipment and facilities, as indicated in the following table.

<b>Animal Production, Werribee</b>		
1996 Joint Facility for Food Animal Research (\$2.7 m)	ARC RIEF Grant	\$ 900,000
1997 Joint Facility for Food Animal Research	ARC RIEF Grant	\$ 360,000
1998 Animal Welfare Centre (\$0.5m)	ARC RIEF Grant	\$ 190,000
<b>Forestry, Creswick</b>		
1999 Facility for Forest Biotechnology (\$0.45m)	ARC RIEF Grant	\$ 250,000
<b>2000 (Pending)</b>		
SRC for Forest Products Biotechnology (Forestry)	ARC Requested	\$2,796,000
Facility for Molecular Analysis (FoodSci, Werribee)	ARC Requested	\$ 582,850
Research Lab. Forest Planning (Forestry, Creswick)	ARC Requested	\$ 250,000
Molecular Plant Breeding Lab (Crops, Longerenong)	ARC Requested	\$ 400,000

**Research Operating Income:** Research income, obtained through national competitive grants, were of critical importance in establishing leadership in a peer-assessed process, and from other sections of the public sector. A doubling of research income over these four years as shown in the table provided the clearest indication of the success of ILFR in generating additional core research activity. Interruption of the Strategy from March 1998 exacerbated the difficulties of building on this development and led to the outcomes suggested in Chapter 11.

<b>Total Research Income (\$'000's)</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
National Competitive Grants	1,131	1,874	2,513	2,843	
Other Public Sector	681	790	508	890	
Industry and Other	709	612	930	954	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2, 521</b>	<b>3, 276</b>	<b>3, 951</b>	<b>4, 687</b>	<b>5,000 est</b>

#includes all research income of the amalgamating Faculty and VCAH now ILFR

\*full year projection

**Alliances:** The ILFR strategy called for the establishment of alliances particularly with the State Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Through such an alliance, sharing of infrastructure, staff and research submissions for additional research funding strengthened the performance of the partners. The Strategic Plan of ILFR foreshadowed an increasing relationship between the State Government and ILFR in order to ensure the continued provision of high quality services for agriculture and related sectors, in a period when government appeared to be changing the nature of its investment. ILFR's alliance with the State Department, as well as that with the Dairy Research Development Corporation, provided a model for increased efficiency in delivering industry and government investment direct to research activities, by reducing costly overheads associated with competitive proposals, parallel research activities, and inadequate communication between researchers and funders. The following table provides an indication of the alliances and shared investments developed over the period.

<b>Alliance, Infrastructure and Joint Appointment Collaborators</b>	<b>Programs</b>	<b>The Shared Resource</b>
<b>Animal Production</b>		
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment Dairy Research & Develop Corp Meat & Livestock Corp	Soil, Water and Nutrient Program	1 Research Fellow
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment Dairy Research & Develop Corp	Pasture Production and Feedbase Program	1 Research Fellow
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment through the Victorian Institute of Animal Science Dairy Research & Develop Corp	Dairy Animal Performance Program	2 Professors
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment through the Victorian Institute of Animal Science Victorian University of Technology LaTrobe University	Joint Facility for Food Animal Research, Werribee	1 Professor
<b>Resource Management and Horticulture</b>		
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment through the Institute for Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture	Soil, Water Resource Mgmt, Horticulture	1 Professor

State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment Dairy Research & Develop Corp Meat & Livestock Corp	Soil, Water and Nutrient Program	
<b>Crop Production</b>		
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment through the Victorian Institute of Dryland Agriculture Grains Research and Development Corp	Crop Improvement	1 Professor
<b>Food Science and Agribusiness</b>		
State Dept of Natural Resources & Environment, CSIRO Australia food Industry Science Centre	Food Science Alliance, Werribee	1 Professor

**Postgraduate Students:** ILFR undertook its research obligations in conjunction with research training, bringing young intelligent minds together to join with the experience of senior academic staff. ILFR accepted a challenge to continue to increase graduate student enrolments, including international students, as part of further developing its research profile and contributing to the wider University.

<b>Postgraduate Numbers</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999 (to 31/03/99)</b>
PhD Enrolments	52	60	57	75	78	(84)
Masters Enrolments	40	42	78	69	73	(71)
Completions (Masters and PhD)	8	16	33	22	36	(7)
Industry/Faculty Research Scholarships	0	3	8	15	22	(24)

**Interdisciplinary Programs:** Interdisciplinary programs were based on departmental plans, themselves components of the overall Faculty Plan. They were reflected in new appointments of senior staff and new initiatives by those and existing staff within ILFR. Changes in areas of research concentration are evident in the following selection of topics and research areas listed in successful programs or project grant applications and special incentive grants received since 1995.

#### **Research Concentration and Interdisciplinary Programs by Department:**

**Department of Animal Production:** Five Special Research Incentive Grants were awarded in 1996-98 for new researchers/initiatives. New Research Topics included:

- Pasture production and utilisation in dairy systems
- Genetics of milk production and functionality
- Reproductive performance in the high producing dairy cow
- Milk composition and key metabolites as response indicators
- Genotype and nutrition in meat production and product quality
- Animal welfare in intensive animal industries

Significant success was achieved in ARC RIEF, ARC SPIRT, DRDC, and PRDC grants. New research activities were generated at Werribee, PVI Hamilton, Glenormiston, Kyabram and Ellinbank. Postgraduates included 9 Masters and 20 PhD students. Two staff enrolled in PhD programs.

**Department of Crop Production and Joint Centre for Crop Improvement:** Six Special Research Incentive Grants were awarded in 1996-98 for new research initiatives. Selected Research Topics included:

- Molecular markers and probes for crop improvement
- Deriving the rules for plant growth and development
- Options for sustainable wheat/maize double cropping in Hebei, China
- Genetic resistance/tolerance to take-all and rhizoctonia
- Review of evaluation in agricultural extension
- Tools for Participatory work with dryland farmers

Significant success in ARC, and GRDC grants. Strong research focus on Oilseeds at Longerenong. New molecular genetics research activity at Parkville and Horsham. Postgraduates: 18 Masters and 14 PhD students.

**Department of Food Science and Agribusiness:** Eight Special Research Incentive Grants were awarded in 1996-98 for new researchers/initiatives. Selected Research Topics included:

- Effect of raw milk handling on lipolysis in milk and dairy products
- Recycling of waste water generated by the food industry
- Molecular genetics and physiology of food micro-organisms
- Food chemistry and analysis for safety and quality
- Responsiveness of demand for meat to changes in advertising expenditure
- Effects of rural adjustment policies on farmers and rural communities
- Economics of supplementary feeding strategies in the dairy industry.

Research in agribusiness was strengthened by two appointments. New buildings and equipment for food research were developed at the Gilbert Chandler Campus. Funding support was through National Australia Bank, DRDC, CRC for International Food Manufacture and Packaging Science and Food Science Australia. Postgraduates: 21 Masters and 8 PhD Students.

**Department of Forestry:** Three Special Incentive Grants were awarded in 1996-98 for new research initiatives. Selected Research Topics included:

- Cropper Creek Hydrologic Project
- Tissue culturing techniques (E. Globulus and E.nitens)
- Wood pyrolysis
- Heartwood and sapwood decay in living trees
- Master Treegrower Program

Significant success in ARC, RIEF; applications pending for SRC and CRC. Postgraduates: 22 Masters and 27 PhD Students.

**Department of Resource Management and Horticulture:** Seven Special Research Incentive Grants awarded 1996-98 for new researchers/initiatives. Selected Research Topics included:

- Sustainable grazing systems key programs: Water and Nutrients
- Perception of native vegetation in rural landscapes
- Development of new plant cultivars by genetic engineering
- Relationships off fungal endophytes of epacridaceae and ericaceae
- Site selection: soils for vineyards

Seventeen research projects were conducted over the past five years funded through Large and Small ARC grants, R&D Corporation projects, and incentive and industry funded grants. Major research infrastructure funding provided a laboratory for gel electrophoresis work associated with several cultivar identification projects. Postgraduate students: 20 Masters and 18 PhD Students.

**Future Research Performance:** Research performance in ILFR was considered a primary indicator of the health of the organization as it consolidated the benefits of the merger. While there was an expectation of research expertise developing further, parallel development of expertise in educational outreach, particularly through scholarly development of electronic learning packages was to be a focus of some VCAH staff. The traditional three pillars relating to agricultural knowledge – research, education and extension, were to increasingly be reflected through ILFR in the form of research and its communication through education and other means,; this was to be more than traditional extension services and it was expected that research in communication and electronic educational mechanisms would be developed in this section of the Faculty; this proved a difficult concept to understand for some staff. The opportunities, and hence responsibilities in the terms I outlined in Falvey (1997) required planned and dedicated action to remedy past delays. Unfortunately, the Board declined to acknowledge research as a priority and thus re-oriented the Faculty from its Plan and back towards its past roles of one of several faculties in an oversupplied sector of education.

## **Internationalisation**

**Students:** The Institute of Land and Food resources had commenced a formal program for international candidates in 1981. By 1999, more than 250 international students had enrolled within an increasingly varied range of courses, particularly postgraduates. Given the past comparatively small size of the old Faculty relative to other faculties of the University, these enrolments represented a substantial achievement. Of particular interest is the range of backgrounds from which students came, more than 40 countries:

Argentina	Indonesia	Nigeria	Swaziland
Bangladesh	Iran	Pakistan	Tanzania
Bhutan	Jamaica	Papua New Guinea	Thailand
Botswana	Japan	Philippines	The Gambia
Canada	Kenya	PR China	Trinidad & Tobago
Croatia	Lao PDR	Uganda	Turkey
Ethiopia	Malawi	Senegal	UK

Fiji	Malaysia	Singapore	USA
Ghana	Mauritius	Solomon Islands	Vietnam
Hong Kong	Nepal	Spain	Zambia
India	New Zealand	Sri Lanka	Zimbabwe

The following section on international activities was largely prepared by the International Coordinator, Mr John Perkins.

**International Student Enrolments (EFTSU, at Semester 1, 1999)**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
OTHD**	10	15	18	12	8
HD***	26	23	36	32	35
Total	36	38	54	44	43

\*\*Other than Higher Degree: diplomas and advanced diplomas; undergraduates; grad certificates & grad diplomas, etc

\*\*\*Higher degrees: Masters (including research, coursework and combined); PhD; higher doctorates, etc.

Some trends became apparent, many of them a reflection of a situation common to similar faculties, both Australian and international. Enrolment was dependent upon the availability of national and international scholarships, of which in traditional agricultural fields there was a declining number. The lack of well-paid career opportunities available to holders of degrees in the areas of production-centred agriculture, forestry and horticulture resulted in a relatively low level of interest from non-scholarship applications.

In recognition of providing qualifications appropriate to more urban and technology-centred candidates, ILFR introduced new degrees for more specific groups both in Australia and overseas, eg:

- **Master of Agribusiness** (coursework and including an on-line delivery system)
- **Master of Food Technology** (coursework and expanding beyond the dairy technology options currently available)
- **Master of Forest Industries** (coursework, designed as an on-line service for professionals within the wood processing industries)

**Postgraduate Research:** The growing interest in internationalisation resulted in more postgraduate researchers undertaking fieldwork outside Australia. There were too many to list individually; examples included:

- An Australian PhD working on constraints affecting village producers in the semi-arid zones of Burkina Faso, West Africa.
- An Australian Volunteer Abroad located at Bhattambang, northwest Cambodia, determining the impact of a schools-centred training course on sustainable rice production is the subject of her part-time Masters candidature.
- An Australian staff member of the World Bank enrolled in a part-time Masters involved in project design and spending time in Washington, USA, and Melbourne.

More numerous were international candidates who undertook a period of fieldwork within their home country. Recent examples from the many completed included:

- A study of the extent of informal credit usage by smallholder farmers in selected areas of Fiji.
- In Botswana, a study was conducted of a systems-based survey of productivity and constraints, with a sample from small-scale commercial poultry farmers.
- A candidate in Bhutan collected blood samples from the yak population of Bhutan, to determine the extent of genetic diversity in view of the country's desire to conserve unique genetic stocks.
- In the Philippines, a Masters candidate the extent of adoption of widely promoted technology packages for soybean production.
- An American citizen enrolled in a PhD to study the rangeland management systems of nomadic groups in the Tibetan High Plateau.

**Scholarship:** Most scholarships for international candidates were provided through AusAID, the official development program of the Australian Government. There was a deliberate move to seek and encourage applications from other scholarship providers, from which a far more diverse scholarship structure resulted. Candidates by 1999 came from Senegal (supported by the World Bank Graduate Studies Program) and Papua New Guinea (Asian Development Bank). ILFR was also successful in supporting applications from many candidates for the Government's Overseas Postgraduate Research Scholarships (OPRS) and those offered from within the University of Melbourne scholarship awards (MIRS/MIFRS). A UK candidate was the first PhD enrolled at ILFR as a recipient of the prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship (CFSP) award; a casual staff member of the Faculty was supported by the Faculty when awarded the Chevening Scholarship, which enabled her to complete a one-year Masters at the University of Reading, UK, during a break from her ILFR PhD candidature.

Australian candidates have also secured support for research projects overseas, or with an international theme. For example, a scholarship sponsored by ACIL, a leading group involved in international project management is concentrated on the delivery and impact of Australian aid in the South Pacific. The Burkina Faso project was largely underwritten by PLAN International, a non-government organization specialising in child and family welfare within low-income societies.

**Projects:** As was customary in the tertiary education sector, most international projects involving ILFR input had a research or education focus. The Faculty managed, or contributed to, a large number of such activities, some examples of which are presented below.

Summary Title	ILFR participants	Location	Summary Activities	Funding*	Duration
Preservation of Wood Poles	P. Vinden	Vietnam Australia	Research and training project, investigating use of non-toxic wood preservatives to increase utility of acacia and eucalyptus poles produced by village farmers in Vietnam	ACIAR	1994/7
Cattle and Buffalo Management	J. Perkins J. Petheram	Vietnam	Research study of current productivity in cattle and buffalo enterprises managed by smallholder farmers.	ACIAR	1994/6



Dairy Technologies in Thailand	A. Egan L. Falvey	Thailand	Training and exchange program investigating opportunities for incorporating new technologies into post-harvest processing of liquid milk.	AAECP	1995/97
Wheat-Rice Intercropping	D. Connor J. Timsina	Bangladesh Australia	Research study incorporating simulation modelling of cropping interactions and field research in Bangladesh, includes academic exchanges and visiting fellows.	ACIAR	1996/00
National Resource Action Planning	J. Perkins R. Reid	Thailand Australia	Assist, Chiang Mai University with planning of undergraduate and graduate courses for new Department of Forestry.	SAS, Australian Embassy, Thailand	1997/8
Agricultural Education	V. Pollard R. Clements D. Brook A. Almond	Solomon Islands	Developing curricula for Certificate in Tropical Agriculture for Solomon Islands College of Higher Education.	AusAID	1997/8
Increasing the Profitability of Pig Production	J. Perkins P. Hughes	Indonesia, Vietnam	Training courses, research study and exchange missions covering nutrition, breeding and reproduction of village and commercial pig production.	AAECP	1997/8
Institutional Upgrading Project	V. Pollard L. Ferguson J. Lawes A. Morgan P. Guthrie	Tonga	Developing curricula for Diploma in Agriculture to be offered through Community Development and Training Centre, Tonga.	AusAID	1997/9
Soil-Water Interactions	R. White D. Chen	PR China	Collaborative study with China Academy of Agricultural Sciences, researching effects of fertiliser use on groundwater in the North China Plain.	ACIAR	1998/01
Profitable Beef Development	J. Perkins V. Pollard	Vietnam	Multi-disciplinary collaborative research project examining selected aspects of cattle production systems in Vietnam – marketing, nutrition, forages, breeding, health and by-products.	ACIAR	1999/02
Review of Training and Education	L. Falvey	Australia for all ACIAR programs	Assessment of impact of training and redesign for the whole program and in the design of future projects	ACIAR	1998

\*AAECP ASEAN-Australian Economic Cooperation Program  
ACIAR Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research  
AusAID Australian Agency for International Development  
SAS Special Assistance Scheme

**External Links:** ILFR enjoyed access to a large number of leading universities worldwide through a network of bilateral university-to-university Memoranda of Understanding, plus the group of collaborating institutes comprising *Universitas 21*. ILFR also developed a wide set of more specific institute-level MOU. Most accommodated a range of academic and research exchanges, collaborative studies and similar programs, including:

- Aichi College of Agriculture, Nagoya, Japan
- Agricultural University of Hebei, Boading, PR China
- California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California, USA
- Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- China Agricultural University, Beijing, PR China
- Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Forestry College of Vietnam, Ha Tay, Vietnam
- Hanoi Agricultural University, Hanoi, Vietnam
- Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue, Vietnam
- Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand

- Maejo University, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- Olds College, Alberta, USA
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden
- University of Agriculture and Forestry, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- University of Wisconsin, River Falls, USA
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University College of Forestry and Wildlife Resources, Virginia, USA
- Writtle College, Essex, UK

**Student Exchanges:** A number of successful exchange arrangements, established for many years, attracted more than 100 participants over the five years to 1999. Examples included ILFR undergraduates taking semester or year-long exchanges through a variety of University partners, for example; University of British Columbia, Virginia Polytechnic and California Polytechnic. Work exchange programs also saw ILFR graduates on work/study programs with the University of Minnesota and Ohio State University. A new initiative to attract fee-paying Study Abroad candidates to enrol for one or two semesters and receive full academic credit from their home institute, was targeted at the USA and Europe, where a period of international study was encouraged as part of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The Institute gained funding from the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) scheme funded by DEETYA, for six fourth-year Bachelor of Forestry Science students. These students conducted their Honours-level research projects with the Department of Forestry, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, in 1997 over twelve weeks when they worked on aspects of conservation, re-forestation and catchment management, supported with visits from ILFR supervisors. Postgraduate students from Chiang Mai took advantage of the reciprocal arrangements, spending a semester at Parkville. A number of informal exchanges also took place, particularly with Ubon Ratchathani University in Thailand, with students and academic staff coming to Australia for periods extending from six weeks to twelve months.

**University Involvement:** ILFR staff were active contributors to the wider international thrust of the University. I was a member of the University's apex International Program Committee, which helped the Faculty's profile; staff were involved in the Country Interest Groups of the University, which provided regular discussion fora: India (P. Vinden); Thailand (L. Falvey); Vietnam (J. Perkins); Indonesia (N. Woods).

**Consultancies:** Examples of international consultancies on an individual or group basis, included:

- **Project Design, Cambodia.** (V. Pollard, 1995); commissioned by AusAID to design the Cambodia-Australia Agricultural Extension Project.
- **Vietnam Animal Science Conference.** (J. Perkins, 1995); commissioned by ACIAR, a group of ILFR staff organised and managed the first international animal science conference in Vietnam for many years, attended by more than 90 Vietnamese and international delegates.

- **Project Design, Burkina Faso.** (J. Perkins, 1997); requested by PLAN International, Australia, to design a research study on increasing the sustainability of dryland farming systems in the semi-arid zones of West Africa.
- **Forestry Service, India** (I. Ferguson, 1995); Professors Ferguson and Vinden, and Dr Weston, undertook a series of commissions with the Indian Forestry Service including substantial periods of in-country residence.
- **Project Design, Philippines** (V. Pollard, 1998); Project design commissioned by AusAID, leading to the Agricultural Extension Project in North Mindanao Province, Philippines.
- **Rural Health, Indonesia.** (N. Wood 1998/99); Study of rural health infrastructure in a number of Provinces.
- **Pig Reproduction CD-ROM.** (1998/00, P. Hughes); a consortium of international collaborators from Australia, USA and Europe was formed to develop a CD-diagnostic CD-ROM package on pig reproduction, for sale to large-scale intensive piggery manager

**Missions:** ILFR staff were regular visitors to many overseas locations for the purposes of research, conferences attendance and presentation, visiting fellowships and study leave. The University introduced more formal marketing and information missions, to which ILFR staff were active contributors, accompanying Deans and senior University members, for example; Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia in 1997; and Gulf States in 1998.

**Distinguished International Colleagues:** ILFR benefited from visits for periods from a few days to ten weeks from international leaders; two of whom received honorary doctorates in agricultural science, and two others who came as Meigunyah Distinguished Fellows of the University.

Dr Ismail Serageldin, B.Sc (Cairo), PhD (Harvard), M.Reg.Pl. (Harvard), Vice President for Environmentally Sustainable Development, World Bank was awarded D.Ag.Sc.(Hon.Causa) in 1996. The testamur for the award read, in part, ... *Dr Serageldin is a world leader in agricultural and environmental fields. He is internationally revered as a charismatic leader of thousands in the sciences and development. His broadly based interests provide a perspective on world problems that is unique in major development agencies. As Vice President for Environmentally Sustainable Development, he is the world's most influential person in environment investments ... The environment portfolio is the world's largest - amounting to \$10 billion for 137 projects in 62 countries. Of this, approximately \$5.5 billion have been invested since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. ... As Chairman of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Dr Serageldin oversees the work of 16 international agricultural research centres dedicated to promoting food security in developing countries ... Dr Serageldin is the Founder and Chairman of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, ... the first Chairman of a Global Water Partnership, ... and has also worked closely with the Third World Foundation of North America, with the Third World Academy of Sciences, Italy, with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences [and] the Union of Concerned Scientists. ...*

Professor Charan Chantalakhana B.Sc (hons)(Iowa State), PhD (Iowa State) was also awarded the degree of D.Ag.Sc. (Hon.Causa) in 1997. The testamur read, in part, ... *Professor Charan Chantalakhana is an eminent Thai Animal Scientist and international research leader ... Professor Charan has been a member of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the peak research management group for the 16 international agricultural research centres which produced the Green Revolution. In that capacity he also served as TAC liaison scientist for the International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA), the Institute for Livestock Research on Animal Diseases (ILRAD), the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Centre for International Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). He was a member of the Advisory Committee that led to the establishment of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and now serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of that Institute. His international activities have also included a review of the Australian based Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research at the end of its initial establishment phase...*

The Faculty successfully attracted funds for two distinguished persons to spend time at ILFR as Miegunyah Fellows. In 1997, Dr Christian Bonte-Friedheim received the award and spent 10 weeks at ILFR. Dr Bonte-Friedheim was the Director General of the International Service for National Agricultural Research, an organization that he developed as the world's leading think tank on national agricultural research organizations, as one of 16 international research centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. He was a nominee for the Director General position of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and was its Assistant Director from 1986 to 1989.

The 1999 Miegunyah Distinguished Fellow was Dr Paul O'Connell, internationally known for innovative approaches to linking often separated disciplines related to agriculture and the environment. Dr O'Connell was Specialist Adviser to the Chief of Agriculture and Rural Development in the World Bank, based on his experience in the U.S. Forest Service, as Special Assistant to Federal Assistant Secretary for Science and Education, USDA, the Cooperative State Research Service, Commodity Associations for corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton and the Alternative Agriculture Research and Commercialisation Center.

**Global Agricultural Science Policy:** This 1996 conference was organised by a committee that including me with representatives from the State Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research, and LaTrobe University. It attracted agricultural leaders from more than 30 countries to Melbourne, allowing the Faculty to showcase itself. The conference spurred confidence in Faculty activities in less developed countries in keeping with the emerging Strategic Plan directive for a balance between less developed countries and global food and environmental issues, and more developed countries, particularly peer institutions. My own involvement in international agriculture also assisted the Faculty; my inaugural Professorial Lecture was entitled *Food Security and the Environment* and took a global context for the consideration of agricultural education. I was then invited as a Resident Scholar at the Rockefeller Centre at Bellagio, Italy where I wrote the book *Food Environment Education: Agricultural*

*Education in Natural Resource Management* (Falvey, 1996), which provided a global context for the Faculty Plan.

Critical to the overall vision, the international profile of the Faculty slipped from 1998/99 as distractions from governance issues and Faculty international budgets were reduced, and as other Faculties within the University and other universities increased their international activities. Amidst the successes listed above, the concerns expressed in the minutes of governance and management groups as introduced in Chapters 5 and 6, created disruptions which interrupted the implementation of both research and internationalisation aspects of the Strategic Plan; these concerns are discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 10

### Polemic

The far-reaching Strategic Plan allowed as an early output that accomplishment of the merger ahead of schedule. The essential constant change caused discomfort to some staff more than others. This led to unfortunate public statements that threatened the viability of the objective of creating a Faculty superior to the average of the merged entities.

The need for confidentiality in post-merger plans meant that such details as the following chart were shared only with the Vice Chancellor – the Board to this early stage was still searching for a role. Management had looked forward to the joint management and Board planning retreat at Dookie in early 1998 as the opportunity to gain commitment from the Board and to inform its members of the context in which the Faculty operated. A detailed background briefing paper was prepared, but the Board chose, with some influence of powerful members, to ignore this pivotal document that aimed to assist them in their role. Instead an emotion-charged meeting blamed multiple parties for the Board's hitherto ineffectiveness, and in defending the Faculty senior management and the University, I became the target of that ire.

Some elements of the background paper bear mentioning insofar as they indicate the issues that the Faculty had been facing for some time, and for which management sought some action by the Board; however, these items were left largely unaddressed for a fatally long period, which is what had promoted the paper. Issues listed in the Briefing Paper of early 1998 included:

**Duplication:** Duplication resulting from the merger, and some that even pre-dated it, may once have been justified in terms of geographical separation, but such reasons were now open to challenge. Duplication dissipated staff and capital resources and compromised aspirations of international leadership.

**Quality:** In seeking to establish a range of courses to maintain viability, some college courses appeared to have sacrificed quality. Indications included remedial chemistry teaching in first year degree courses of Applied Science courses and variably low TER scores.

**Environmental Issues and Occupational Health and Safety:** Multiple locations, low maintenance budgets and old facilities affected both OHS and operational costs – all inherited from VCAH and all known to both parties before merger. Insurance cover was managed by the University on the basis of due care in facilities maintenance. I was advised that even more of Faculty's facilities might fail environmental and OHS inspections, as had already been experienced at Creswick. Heads of (college) campuses had often advised VCAH management of the unsatisfactory condition of certain buildings.

**Overheads:** High overheads were incurred as a result of geographical dispersion, the need to maintain multiple support services, buildings and equipment, and through multiple

layers of academic management that resulted from parts of the old structure continuing within the new structure.

**Educational Technology:** Use of multimedia was limited to print-based distance education, which in turn was poorly integrated with on-campus courses. Expertise in multimedia was limited, as evidenced by failure to achieve any of the first round competitive grants offered within the University for development of multimedia subjects. Video conferencing was not used to potential.

**Underfunding of TAFE:** An ongoing VCAH issue with OTFE concerning lack of access to capital development funds, which appeared to compromise ILFR's TAFE activities against those of registered TAFE institutes; this burden was increased by the under-funding of expensive courses in agricultural sectors, particularly in rural locations which affected all TAFE providers and is indicated by low private provider (including TAFE institutes acting in this capacity) interest in expensive courses.

**Staff Profile and Output:** The ILFR staffing profile was based on meeting past needs of providing general levels of education in isolation from other tertiary institutions. A staffing profile for an internationally leading faculty with specific strengths would demonstrate clusters of staff expertise in critical areas; this had implications that would possibly lead to a separation between TAFE teaching-only staff and higher education staff. It also implied a need for high graduate supervision loads, increased research income, and commitment to developing multimedia educational materials.

**Research Income:** Research income had been more than satisfactory for a small Faculty prior to absorption of the colleges; as a large Faculty post-merger, a significant increase in research output became necessary to meet averaged University targets. This was consistent with developing key areas around future industry and public priorities and was to be reflected in a substantial increase in research postgraduate student numbers.

**Other Service Providers:** Private providers as well as government institutions including the Department of Natural Resources and Environment were able to provide education, and in particular training, services within ILFR's sector. Viewing these as competitors was healthy; seeking to drive them out of 'the ILFR market place' reflected unchallenged opinions remnant from an earlier phase in College history when the Colleges were excised from the State Department of Agriculture. Pressures on government agencies, particularly DNRE provide an opportunity for joint activities in these education and training activities.

**Failure to Understand Core Business:** The core business of the faculty was education and research training, with a continued presence in skills-based training, where it could not be met by other providers. It was not appropriate to seek to offer all courses at all levels, as had been an approach in some Colleges. In a changing external environment where many courses could be offered from anywhere in the world, quality and reputation was likely to be a major separator between institutions. The central services which the Faculty had to offer were University of Melbourne accreditation, some specific courses which should have

been made available globally, with some other courses available nationally and regionally with local tutorial services.

**DNRE:** Wider than the issue of DNRE as an education/training provider was that of the State Government's attitude to funding a staff-based organisation to provide services of research, regulation and extension within the State. Assuming continued pressure on budget and in particular, maintenance of a highly staffed organisation, and noting the extensive rural research resources of DNRE, co-location was a central issue to be considered in ILFR strategic planning. From ILFR's perspective, the research facilities, well selected locations, critical masses of professional staff, and links to extension of DNRE made these logical foci for research-based higher education, if additional facilities for students were created.

**Political Interests:** The sensitivity of politics in rural areas needed to be acknowledged in implementation of any decisions arising from changes; when this item was drafted, the media was already actively criticising the Faculty management using me as their target; I considered this an unavoidable and temporary aspect of change in the organisation.

**New Income:** In addition to the imperatives of the University Plan, there was the clear need to make up for lost government funding through fees and other income earning activities. An outcome of charging fees in ILFR's sectors should have been a revision of the estimates of demand for education and training, in keeping with long term downward trends of numbers of persons engaged in production agriculture.

The choices for ILFR were thus elicited as:

- Do nothing.
- Continue implementing the Strategic Plan.
- Adhere to the objective of creating an internationally leading faculty with some refinements to the Strategic Plan.

The "Do nothing" scenario warranted little discussion. I foresaw decreasing government investment in the sector and decreasing allocations within the University of Melbourne to be a logical outcome from any failure to demonstrated international leadership. Individual rural sites would then reduce to non-viable sizes and capital and maintenance demands would lead to closure of unsafe buildings with the risk that Colleges would move out of the sector or close.

"Continuing with the implementation of the existing Strategic Plan", as was current practice, was appropriate since it was consistent with the University's overall Plan. The ILFR plan was developed for the purposes of focus, which was consistent with the University's approach – a process that had facilitated the institutional merger. Revising the current plan to meet anticipated University changes appeared to be a viable approach. This required ILFR to engage in certain additional activities, for example, attracting acknowledged international leaders such as Nobel Laureates, having and using subjects courses offered globally, interacting with other global leaders, benchmarking against other leading public sector universities in Universitas 21, and continuing to improve each year



in a predictable manner. If anything, it would have accelerated implementation of the long-term ILFR objectives but by different paths to those foreseen before the University embarked on its Plan.

“Creating an internationally leading faculty”, required three concurrent approaches. The first was revision and refining of the current Strategic Plan to accord completely with the University. This included revising the overall Faculty statement and defining detail with respect to industries, disciplines, staff and academic investments within academic departments through departmental components of a Faculty plan. The second action was a series of policies which recognised the resource base needed for moving towards an internationally leading faculty while addressing issues of reducing funding, ongoing under-funding in some areas, aging physical assets, and consistency with best practice within the sector. The third action was joint planning with DNRE; for example, the Centre for Forest Tree Technology, and Flora and Fauna Research within DNRE offered bases for more formal collaborative arrangements such that research programs and opportunities both within Australia and overseas could be jointly reviewed, specialisations in new staff appointments rationalised with more joint appointments, and both parties engaged more generally as a matter of course in joint research projects including postgraduate supervision. Co-location would be logical in the medium term.

The third choice included the beneficial aspects of the second option and allowed for issues highlighted earlier to be addressed. Issues including duplication, quality, under-funding of TAFE, and the staffing profile would have been addressed through changes in staff and employment conditions. Issues relating to occupational health and safety at some locations, high overheads, research infrastructure and other service providers would have been addressed through realistic consideration of the use of land, locations, and co-location and co-operation with DNRE. Issues such as inappropriate education technology and low levels of understanding of its use, retaining international leaders, developing an international perspective and student profile and increasing and diversifying the income base would have required further investigation and planning.

The above matters, which were presented in the background paper, were not considered by the Board as they reeled from the shock that the University was serious about its Plan and that this exposed Board members to difficult public scrutiny. The shock reaction is perhaps understandable in retrospect. I could have briefed individual members better when I invited them to join the Board, and I should have realized sooner the levels of distance of Board members from an understanding of their own pronouncements. The tragedy of their actions of early 1998 threatened the ILFR Plan, and setback the opportunity to create a world-leading faculty, as is suggested in the following sections.

### **The Tragedy of the Commons**

Earlier chapters have emphasised the importance of the corporate planning process and the Strategic Plan itself in coalescing the views and focus of persons within the wider faculty. The common grazing land of the village for which no one accepted responsibility provided an agricultural metaphor for ignoring the common ground, which was usually accompanied

by protecting one's turf. The implementation of the Strategic Plan proceeded as discussed in earlier chapters and produced a number of successes in academic, research and international areas. During this period, the significant reduction in government funding assisted the implementation of the Plan in terms of focusing management's attention on proposed changes in the staffing profile. This led to an analysis of staffing requirements and preparation of what now sounds ominous to me, a human resources development plan. Once the budget and human resources plans had been discussed and agreed in the wider University, I presented the implications in summary terms to the Board. The Board, having been legally constituted during 1997, was still seeking its role and it may have been for this reason that it minuted its confidence in management to proceed with the adjustment of the staffing portfolio and to work towards a balanced budget scenario, including those acts that would affect senior and long standing staff and ultimately offend individuals on the Board in their non-Board capacities.

An indicative plan for the changes to be implemented from July 1997 through July 1999 is represented in the Gantt chart below. This was supported by an internal working document of February 1998 which presented a schedule for departmental planning meetings during January and February leading through steps to a Strategic Planning workshop at the end of March, finalisation of departmental staffing during April 1998 with Union consultation during April and May prior to staff meetings. A process involving competitive selection for positions where duplication of staffing had occurred through reduction of activity, or as a function of overlaps from the merger itself was required by the University. With the assistance of the University's Human Resources Director, an approach was determined to begin reduction in the staff in line with the Strategic Plan.

During this period, the issue of the ILFR budget became a public issue. Some unfortunate suggestions that the very apparent shortfall in funds were related to the College attracted the ire of persons associated with VCAH who in turn wished to have this issue clear in the public's eye. At the same time, the media had taken an interest in ILFR through a small yet symbolic closure of a shopfront facility in Kyneton run under the auspices of Longerenong College; the rented room had been providing subsidised services to hobby farmers. While the issue was of local importance, it assumed wider currency through the use of provocative headlines that were not damped down by competitive statements from the nearby University of Ballarat. While the matter was routine and such rented shopfronts had been opened and closed over the years by VCAH according to market demand, the level of media interest indicated a heightened sensitivity and contact with the media by some persons close to ILFR. This appeared to be the source of a media and direct communication campaign that extended to all rural newspapers, the Age, Herald Sun, Stock and Land, and especially the Weekly Times.

### **Media Interest**

Beginning with the Kyneton shopfront facility, and the Macedon Ranges Telegraph on 17 February, the issue was easily escalated as headlines shifted from the College budget to a grandiose "*Meeting to Save College*", which while referring to the shopfront, was bound to attract attention from persons at all College locations. These issues bubbled along until

implementation of the decision to change the roles of College Principals. Each College Principal was advised individually, by the University through individual meetings with the Director of Human Resources Division at which I was present, that the position they had occupied in the past was to change, and that as a valued member of the Faculty they would continue to receive their existing salary while performing a different function. Some individuals asked concerning their benefits receivable on leaving the organisation which exceeded those of regular academics since most if not all Principals had been recruited decades earlier through a State Government superannuation scheme that allowed access to funds at age 55 rather than the usual 60 or 65. But to access such a provision, their positions had to be made redundant, and this was not what the University proposed. Personal superannuation benefits thus added another reason to amplify media misinformation.

### *Agro Politicians*

*And he gave it for his opinion, "that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to form upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together".* Swift's words reverberated in my ears as I heard politicians, not only those elected by the public, denying receipt of information I knew had been provided verbally and in writing in Parliament House only a week earlier – this was a briefing of all rural and related representatives given by the Vice Chancellor and myself in clear words, supported by a carefully worded document. They echoed in my ears when the professoriate met to challenge the influence and actions of the Board, and when the post-graduate study and pure science research matters were dismissed as not critical because the farming community had not asked for them. I could easily have been convinced that southern Australia had created petty agro-politicians associated with interest groups in each sub-small sector of agriculture to an extent unsurpassed in the world. Such a resource of willing persons might seem a gift to a consultative process of change; but it neglects the wide variations in knowledge bases through such groups, and their ready retreat to government for support against change. This even extends to such political logic as ... *even if our local agricultural college seems unviable in student numbers, it should not be closed as it is a resource for the future.* But there was no suggestion of how it would be paid for – industry and individuals believed it was their free right from government, and somehow equated the University with government.

The matter developed into a major press frenzy in which I, with University assistance, sought to clarify facts, while the fears of persons associated with Colleges fuelled old speculations. Notwithstanding the coverage, in consultation with the VC I considered it appropriate to continue with the approved strategy rather than risk protracted inertia and pain for those concerned. At this time, certain Board members became more interested in their role in the light of potential negative publicity. With this background, the Chair of the Board suggested that I reverse my 'decision' to 'sack' College Principals; I reiterated that no one had been sacked and that changes in positions did not mean staff were to leave, notwithstanding the statements of the media. The Chair's view was that perception was

more important than reality and that reversal of the decision was the appropriate action. I advised that he would deliberate on the matter; during his deliberation I discussed the matters with the Vice Chancellor who indicated support for whatever decision I made.

In the event, I made a decision I subsequently saw as wrong. I agreed to 'reinstate' the College Principal positions, reasoning that the interest of the Board was a newly found benefit that had been a missing component in the overall strategy for developing the Faculty. Under the headline *Uni Does Back Flip on Jobs* replete with photographs, potted quotes from all but one Principal and the Dean, the Weekly Times talked up a rift between the Dean and the Board. The article brought together opinions from a range of persons and served to fuel anxieties in rural communities already affected by reductions in government and institutional expenditure as banks, hospitals and government offices were closed.

An indication of the impact of the speculation surrounding the issue was that the joint Planning and Budget Group and Board planning session in the first quarter of 1998 was greeted by 'For Sale' signs on the front of Dookie gate as part of a protest against the perceived attitudes of the University towards Dookie, and by implication other Colleges. That meeting was to be a deciding factor for the future of the faculty – and me.

### **The Dookie Meeting**

While the meeting had been intended as a joint planning session, primarily for the benefit of Board members to understand the large amount of work and direction which had led to the merger and the appointments made to-date, that objective was not even approached. A preliminary meeting, held before the previous evening's dinner with local politicians and industry in Shepparton, was organised to allow me to inform the Board and guests of actual, as distinct from newspaper, facts. There was an agreement that the issues would therefore not interfere with the following day's planning activities, an approach that became but wishful thinking. At the dinner with politicians and interested persons, with the issue at a new height in the media and local consciousness, the spokesman for the Board appeared to separate the Board from management and the University, thereby exacerbating difficulties that were to ensue for the Faculty and the University as a whole in regaining the trust of communities working on the basis of misinformation.

Notes from the meeting of the next day, indicate that I presented the following scenario of the situation. I began with the merger and the high expectation that had been generated from the great effort put into informing various players of the potential of the merger and the need for change in agricultural and related education. The objective of integration was introduced in a context of recognising the role of vocational education and training and the change in the Regional Director/Principal role through 1997. The change in that role had been slower than expected although it had been theoretically completed during December 1997. New Departments had been determined during the second part of 1997 with interim Heads nominated to facilitate planning on behalf of those departments that would become active on 1 January 1998. This period had raised some concerns among College staff, who perceived that departmental management should have included more persons from the Colleges. The difficulty with this approach lay in the role of Department Heads within the

University, their membership of the Academic Board of the University and the requirement for disciplinary leadership according to the agreed Strategic Plan.

Stage	Timeline (Jul '97 - Jul '99)																											
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul			
Merger effectivity	■																											
New departments arranged	■	■	■																									
New Heads appointed				■																								
Two new Heads recruited						■	■	■																				
New departments effective							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Staff adjustments proposed							■																					
New position descriptions drafted							■	■	■																			
Staff adjustments agreed internally							■	■																				
Union consultations							■	■	■																			
Affected staff advised							■																					
Most affected staff depart								■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Consolidation of new depts														■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Development of Dept Strategic Plans							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Strategic new recruitments	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

The Board insisted, with management's advice, that a budget be framed that indicated balance within an appropriate time frame. While the Board believed that it had taken this step itself, the University had in fact, in following its regular principles, made this requirement clear from the beginning of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Departmental plans as part of the Faculty Strategic Plan were developed and these passed without major challenges in the Faculty, although staff concern in the colleges continued.

Mischievous leakage of an unfortunate opinion from an unofficial meeting of all Departmental Heads but one suggesting that budgets be balanced by cuts in the department not represented at that meeting; this caused severe angst particularly at Longerenong which interpreted the document to focus on reduction in staffing at that site. I should have been aware of the insecurity of information in the Faculty. The new Heads had a difficult job in this process, and in particular the power balance between Heads of Campus and Heads of Department caused friction, as some Heads of Campus appeared to be considering their own personal futures at the time. Departmental plans, which were required to fit within budget, indicated staff reductions and consequently raised anxieties further with the involvement of the Union. The positions of College Principal arose in discussions in terms of their academic roles where it was far from clear that they were principle academics in a discipline area. Coupled with a change to a departmental basis that integrated the Colleges weakened old power bases.

### *The Rise of the Barbarians*

The change which occurred so quickly in sectors which had previously supported the University was surprising. Personally, I struggled with a reversal of attitudes towards me as I was seen as the person who had taken action by some, or the face of the University by others. Having been characterised as a hero of agricultural education through the merger period with support for all sides, I was unprepared for the sea change. A period of futile attempts at presenting the whole picture of global and national changes and needs ensued with the primary output being hard won victories to maintain some of the strategy for change and improvement. The message I preached, like me, remained a 'bright golden flower' only in the wider and global debate; at home with me became 'an unsightly' root to be tread upon, in the spirit of Milton in *Comus* ...

*A small unsightly root,  
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,  
But in another country, as he said,  
Bore a bright golden flow'r, but not in this soil;  
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain  
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon.*

The burgeoning media demands led to the University's public relations and Human Resource areas becoming involved and a joint process was developed to handle the issue. But the University was not used to this kind of politics. The context outlined above caused reconsideration of some aspects of the Plan's implementation, with the support of the University. The University noted that while the figure of 39 staff being affected had been determined as an acceptable figure to work with, the only discussion that should be entered into henceforth was whether it still remained at 39 or was 34 with the positions of Principals having been reconsidered. The Dean noted that the issues to be considered at this time were; the personal positions of Heads of Campus given the public profile, regional confidence which if possible should be separated from political involvements, the budget's uncertainty, Union attitudes to staff reductions, and the credibility of the Board and myself as the result of public criticisms.

The mood of the Dookie meeting shifted when the Chair demanded to know why it was not advised of changes to positions and intended departures beforehand. The matter had been minuted from the previous Board meeting although pointing out this fact did not cool the heat of the discussion. I took the attitude that the new Heads of Department, observing the meeting while still gaining their confidence in the new system for their large responsibilities, should not be subject to the wrath of Board individuals who felt they had been unnecessarily exposed to regional political criticisms. As a consequence, I accepted all criticisms that were targeted at Heads. Some Board members then claimed that the University was a commercial organisation in which I had absolute power to act independently for my commercial division. Judging that this was not an appropriate time to attempt to educate Board members on the workings of the University, I allowed the criticism to be offered vigorously and duly informed the University.

In discussions with the Vice Chancellor, I advised that the Board was entertaining objectives inconsistent with those of the University. He noted that the Board was demanding power greater than that specified in the Regulation and that the reaction of individuals related to agro-politics more than the University. The Board insisted that the situation was out of control politically – it was not - and that their permission should have been sought concerning position changes and their timing, ignoring the fact that this matter had been planned within the University and that the Board had been given the prior advise and offered the opportunity to discuss and even veto any action. The Board then accused the Vice Chancellor and me of having ... *‘snowed’ the Deputy Premier/Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Education together with National Party representatives when they introduced the concept and the need for reduction to these persons in Parliament House.* I was surprised and impressed at the VC’s ability to ignore such an attack – so I tried to do the same although my first reaction was to counter Board and press misunderstandings. From this time, I became less effective in leading change.

I saw that my position had been compromised by acquiescing to the Board’s requirement to reverse action of the Principal positions and felt that the acting out of the play before the new Heads of Department would undermine their own confidence and the organisation’s ability to make the major changes that it had agreed upon. From this point forward, the Board became involved in management; initially through the Issues Committee formed at that meeting, but more particularly through an apparent desire to influence the University’s involvement within a wider political agenda. I suspected the personal motives in some Board members.

### **More Media**

Stories concerning the Kyneton shopfront continued and picked up momentum in connection with positive, news which the Faculty was generating, although misreporting of the College Principals issue fuelled ongoing speculation. While the Board took the attitude that it would damp-down the media, items in train and the involvement of the Board in University matters, became newsworthy in itself. Individual members of staff assumed the right to provide information to the media through interviews and Letters to the Editor. Union representatives from the University became involved and the fatuous issue shifted from one of Principals’ positions to imagined closure of Colleges, a far more sensitive issue and one guaranteed to maintain newspaper column inches.

I had travelled around Victoria extensively since my appointment as part of the strategy for merger and change. I now increased my travel, as did many others to answer questions in regional areas; this contained outbreaks in some areas while wildfires sprang up in others. Discussions in Parliament raised the issue to a new height with specific questions which revealed details which could only have been provided by staff within the ILFR itself. I remained determined to seek to assist the Faculty regain some ground towards further implementation of the Strategic Plan through 1998 and to delay a number of personal academic activities planned for that period.

Press links between imagined college closures and misrepresented staff reductions were easily made by soliciting quotes from insecure College staff. Various statements which had been made concerning the critical size of individual Colleges in staff terms were easily used to indicate that further reductions would make Colleges unviable. Reductions in staff numbers meant reductions in courses, and it was subsequently easy to bias articles by using high cost courses not even offered at the Colleges to suggest reduced student numbers.

### ***Not Blinking***

My decision to reinstate the positions of the Principals was a mistake. Even the reasoning for accepting the perceived cost of the reversal appears breathtaking in its naivety from this illuminated vantage of the future. Reasoning that this would create a working Board from the hitherto listless group simply added to the problems, although not fatally as the power struggle would have been won by the University and me its appointed leader of change had not subsequent University's priorities shifted. In retrospect, I should have delayed on empowering the Board until the main staffing profile had been changed. The Vice Chancellor's view when it was clear that we had lost the momentum and I intimated that I saw a long hiatus that I would not wait through was ... *next time we won't blink* ... In such a circumstance, the heat which change would generate could have acted as shield to hide subsequent actions in the manner of the Zen rinkushu ...

*Ride your horse along the edge of a sword;  
Hide yourself in the middle of the flames.*

Meanwhile, the departmental document of no status representing one view of how to reduce budgets that had excited staff at Longerenong continued to develop into a specific issue. Associated with a graduation ceremony, the Chancellor Sir Edward Woodward and I met in the Horsham Mayor's office with the former Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Bill McGrath and a number of leading producers from the region. This was a particularly successful aspect of the campaign due to the clarity of discussion and the assistance of the former Minister in presenting a realistic scenario of University and colleges being subject to federal government funding cuts while seeking to meet educational obligations.

A second wild fire sprang up, causing further suspicion that these new outbreaks were not autogenous; this was in the form of spurious threats to the Burnley Horticultural Gardens. Deft linkage of Burnley College issues to the rising rural sympathy allowed a significant lobby to be developed for the issue of Burnley. Through relating staff reductions to viability of the site, it was suggested that the Burnley Gardens themselves were under threat. More than one hundred news articles, now covered the subjects of budget, staff reductions, and college heads; such articles in one rural newspaper fuelled those in another in a self-feeding process that caused news to be re-presented up to two weeks later as if it was a new set of information. The issue of the financial position of the former VCAH at the time of merger attracted concern from former College Council Chairs and the recently retired Principal and the truth, while easily presented, gained little public credibility. While operating budgets of VCAH had indicated balance, the lack of access to capital works had meant that



operational budgets had to be expended on maintenance and that many facilities were sub-optimal. VCAH Council minutes had noted that 1998 would have been a time when VCAH would be unable to meet its operating budget as a function of the government's progressive reductions in higher education allocations which totalled 25 percent over the ensuing five years.

Industry groups gained voice after articles featured in rural newspapers for several weeks, promoting letters and news releases through the Victorian Farmers Federation at local and central levels and regional research and extension groups. Regional politicians saw the need to express concern for matters which they purported to have influence over and gave undertakings to solve the situation for their own regional College. As the news filtered through about reversals in the changes to College Principals' functions, the Vice Chancellor wrote to the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training pointing out the various issues by way of information. Television began to show an interest in the Burnley matter and the University began to adopt a more proactive approach with the media.

By early April, it was clear that the multiple misconceptions given currency through the media and mischievous rumours had subverted the process of organisational change for the time being. Involvement of Unions and staff of the Faculty with the media led to staff contravening University regulations and to deepening divisions between traditional University and College staff. In retrospect, by this time it might have been clear that the Faculty strategy was in jeopardy. Implicit criticism of financial management of VCAH led to the two most recent past College Directors writing to the Vice Chancellor on 1 April.

Newspaper clippings from the month of April flow through headlines such as *Uni Dumps its Plans*, under which the Premier Jeff Kennett is purported to have contacted ILFR to discuss plans for changes, implying that political intervention had led to a change in the University's strategy. The Weekly Times ran letters from students and a College Principal under a headline *Dispute Has Two Sides* thereby implying that the two sides were represented in the two letters so presented when in fact the two came from the same source.

Stock and Land attributed changes to the Premier and asserted erroneously that staff had supported a no confidence motion in the Dean, of whom Stock and Land accurately stated that *the man at the centre of the storm remains convinced the proposed changes were the best way ahead for the rural campuses*. Reinstatement of the Longerenong Head of Campus remained news in early April in the Wimmera, while a Gippsland paper ran letter from the Head of McMillan College who had also been published in a letter to the Age on April 3. Campus Review Weekly, which circulated amongst all Australian University staff and postgraduates, elaborated on the untrue no confidence vote in the Dean over the issue of '40 redundancies'.

With continued press coverage across regional and local rural newspapers and in the city and University press, individuals became concerned and begun to submit their own views by way of letter. These letters range from balanced views based on information available to the authors through to personal attacks. All correspondence on which an address had been included was answered in an informative manner, in many cases inviting the

correspondent to call to discuss the matter further. Around this time, the University initiated its own mechanism for handling some of the correspondence and communication of information to interested parties through regular bulletins – this was at my request simply because I was unable to keep up with it all through my office. In addition to external persons being spurred into action, the University Council raised some concerns and the Vice Chancellor presented the report to the Council on 6 April. In this report, it was reiterated that certain undertakings had been made by the University in the interests of quelling speculation; these were:

- none of the former VCAH Colleges would be closed
- there would be no reduction of the emphasis in the ILFR on TAFE programs in comparison with higher education programs
- the education and training programs of ILFR would be designed and monitored in closed liaison with rural communities and rural industry needs, and, in particular, the type, range and location of higher education courses will not be varied except where advice has been received from the Board following extensive consultation with the communities and industries concerned
- there would be no reduction in the foreseeable future in student numbers of rural campuses despite the cuts being absorbed in Parkville
- there will be no net movement of staff from rural to urban campuses
- the *status quo* at the time of the VCAH/University of Melbourne amalgamation was financial unsustainable, specifically for the former VCAH Colleges, and that the Board has no choice therefore but address key issues of financial viability and structure, and
- that in the context of current Federal load reductions, funding cuts and failure to supplement properly negotiated salary increases, the VCAH would have fared much worse on its own than the former VCAH colleges and their staff and students would fare as part of the University of Melbourne, which accepts the responsibility to increase the resources available to the new Institute.

By April 8, the Weekly Times was arguing that the amalgamation needed to be reviewed. Contrasting the University approach of targeting talented students to provide contributions to agriculture with the immediate employability of students exiting college courses, the article appealed to the existing farming community who understood the immediacy and the skills orientation of College courses more than they did higher education. Around the same time, questions on notice were asked in Parliament concerning the financial positions and staff numbers for VCAH Colleges and the old Faculty; these were easily answered in factual terms. The context of a separate series of questions concerning the appointment of Heads of Department and about me, also easily answered, raised concerns about the integrity of some staff and led me to tighten security of offices records.

By April 10, two Principals had insisted that their positions had been made redundant, notwithstanding the positions having being ‘reinstated’. This allowed them to exercise redundancy provisions. This was further news. Letters from consultants, Victorian Farmers Federation representatives, individual concerned citizens, parents and students continued to flood my office, some of which provided an indication of a coordinated program. A series of postcards of the Burnley Gardens was sent to the Vice Chancellor and me with a

range of messages; the postcards arrived in the weeks following the Melbourne Flower Show where students had lobbied an interested public.

Regular bulletins over the names of the Board Chair and the Dean began during this period with some of the initial messages carried in University News. The Chair met with some individuals, while I continued to meet with hundreds of persons in Melbourne and around the State.

By May 7, the Issues Committee of the Board had attracted the attention of the media, in particular through the University's appointment of KPMG to examine the University's accounts. In an article in *Stock and Land*, the Deputy Head of Glenormiston College is quoted as saying that the appointment of KPMG is indicative of a power shift from the Dean to the Board. A non-sequitur, the statement contained two essential if unlinked facts.

The strategy suggested by the Board and accepted by the University to make ILFR un-newsworthy for a period began to bear fruit. The Chair made statements which were conciliatory, particularly to rural communities and inadvertently locked the University into a more difficult situation for the changes which I continued to consider inevitable. A Green Paper, a pompous name for the document in response to what responsible staff saw as a pompous Board attitude as discussed below, provided a consensus management view for staff to consider as a useful mechanism for refining the paper. The Board withdrew its support from the unanimous Green Paper outcome until it heard from other parties, thereby alienated itself from the management and the senior academics of the Faculty. Responses to the Green Paper were varied; for example the Victorian Farmers Federation focused on the need for higher education delivery in rural areas, increased budget flexibility on rural campuses, greater integration of TAFE courses across all providers and a return to a production focus for agriculture. The VFF, while attempting to provide a balanced approach assumed that ILFR existed solely for the farming community while failing to acknowledge its ornamental horticulture, food processing, agribusiness, and natural resource management components.

By now I was seeking means of preserving what I could, as were the more responsible members of the Faculty from both the Old Faculty and VCAH. In reserving its rights to make changes to the Green Paper, the Board also made changes from the unanimous view of Faculty management, one of which caused considerable angst at the time. The removal of Production Horticulture from the Department of Crop Production to join Ornamental Horticulture in a department restyled as Resource Management and Horticulture raised staff comments which suggested the change would:

- limit the Department of Crop Production to dryland, non-irrigated aspects while industry (and the Plan) required an integrated systems approach
- preclude a cohesive treatment of plant biology which is important to gain the efficiencies across common areas such as breeding, management systems and pathology
- make a Department of Crops of marginal size by reducing it from around 27 to around 20 academics and thereby limit its options for growth and leverage to gain additional funding for the areas of crop production

- accomplish little as there was scant commonality of interest with amenity horticulture.

Another issue concerned the natural resource management split between the Department of Forestry and the Department of Resource Management and Horticulture and a perception that the attempts to locate Heads of Department in rural areas indicated a downgrading of academic status, fuelled the perception that Parkville staff were not valued, and made mockery of the frequent Board statements of a consultation process being followed. However, the major impacts of concern surrounding Board rearrangement of departmental heads to meet political objectives, was the loss of momentum for implementation of the strategic plan, and the resignation of a valued leader of the critical social sciences.

The Strategy was side-lined and staff demoralised. Nevertheless, the Green Paper reflected a more mature combined view from the protagonists. Sections of that paper are presented below.

### **Green Paper**

Specific elements of the Green Paper, taken verbatim, were:

*The overall thrust of the proposals is to engender an ILFR-wide (or 'corporate') approach to ILFR's activities and reduce the emphasis on competition between campuses, whilst recognising that each campus has a different regional focus.*

*It is proposed that ILFR would operate organisationally as a matrix model with discipline/industry-based academic programs being delivered through five academic departments at ILFR's eight campuses. Administrative support for the higher education and TAFE programs would be provided on a site basis. This is a complex organisational arrangement and requires strong academic leadership of ILFR through the Dean, Deputy Deans and Associate Deans as well as academic and discipline leadership of departments (Heads of Departments) and strong academic leadership and management at campuses (Heads of Campuses).*

*The main role of the Head of Department is to provide academic and administrative leadership and to facilitate a collegial and productive working environment for staff in the department and the educational experience of students. The Head of Department also has a commitment for ensuring the Department meets ILFR objectives of national leadership and international participation.*

*The Head of Campus has two main roles; firstly to coordinate and manage academic activities at their campus on behalf of the Dean and the Head(s) of the Department(s) represented at the campus, and secondly, to be a focus for ILFR on regional/industry issues.*

*Success in the positions of Head of Department and Head of Campus will rely on strong interdependency with each other and the General Manager for academic program delivery and administrative services respectively.*

*Administrative support would be provided on a site basis, managed at each site by a Manager Campus Administration, who would report to the General Manager and the Head of Campus.*

*A detailed consultation strategy with staff, students and external stakeholders is proposed, comprising a video-conference to all staff from the Dean and Chair of the Board, followed by campus-based meetings with staff, students and external stakeholders. Written feedback will also be sought.*

*A new chart of financial accounts is being established to facilitate financial reporting. Reports will be able to be generated so that TAFE and higher education funds will be separated and the financial position will be able to be looked at either on a departmental or campus basis.*

*The Institute is also working on developing a new undergraduate curriculum and feedback from stakeholders will be sought as part of a separate communication and consultation strategy. Similarly, detailed financial planning is occurring and further consultation with stakeholders will occur to invite feedback.*

*Farms and residential activities have not yet been considered yet as consultant reports are being sought.*

### **Assessing the Damage**

In retrospect, it can be seen that misinformation in rural and to an extent urban college locations fuelled further rumours and led to the Board sensitisation to rural groups. In this process, the clientele which the Strategic Plan was was subtly reinterpreted; in the first instance, the clientele was defined as those persons or organisations which would be of major importance to agriculture and related fields in the future, whereas the concern of the Board was taken up with the wider group of existing farmers, many of whom might not persist in the industry – and yet were the interest of a number of Board members. Moreover, there was an overwhelming bias towards production agriculture throughout 1998 with the only variation being a short period when supporters of Burnley gained prominence. In reacting to a different client base, the Faculty ended up seeking to please one group of rurally based staff over others, which in turn subverted the overall process of increasing the capability of the overall staff portfolio. Thus the Green Paper defined the compromises needed to take the Board's approach; in addition it betrayed the educational and research quality inherent in the approach; international leadership was to be replaced by national or even regional leadership and mere international participation, the working environment for staff was to 'improved' at all locations, and a matrix management system was to reflect the conflicting management arrangements of an organisation with a poorly defined hierarchy in areas related to its core business of high quality education linked to research. Through 1998, the outcome of these activities was increasingly evident by the use of such terms as 'lowest common denominator' in subjects, courses and staff profiles.

A further casualty of the activities of 1998 was my authority. From March I continued to reinstate critical aspects of the overall strategy. My preferred management approach of empowering the new Heads of Department to accept responsibility working in close association with me was made difficult by the Board and the matrix structure. The intention of enhancing the roles of Heads of Department from part-time academic administration to become managers and leaders was lost, as the Board unwittingly provided incentives to the new Heads to behave as part-time academic administrators leaving decisions in their areas to others, as the Board variably and quixotically demanded.

With these constraints, reinstating the overall Plan became extremely difficult. The hiatus caused a loss of momentum. Recognising that the Strategy was no longer viable and that my position was strongly associated with the Strategy, I reconsidered my professional association within the possible outcomes. Notwithstanding the significant advances over the previous four years, the critical changes that were essential to the Strategy but not implemented during 1998 were:

- letting go more staff than needed to simply balance the budget
- appointing new staff in key areas particularly middle level academics to support newly appointed and long standing professorial staff
- reducing the number of courses offered and exchanging higher quality courses with world leading institutions
- continuing the thrust for international integration of curricula, staff and research
- orienting TAFE activities to a specific niche of higher quality than comprehensive TAFE institutes, if as the Vice Chancellor had strangely promised the College and staff all had to be retained.

In the absence of actions on these matters, I had encouraged staff to work together, while at the same time I worked separately with two trusted colleagues to consider a means of re-establishing the essence of the Strategy, through a Strategic Deficit Eradication Plan. These two actions form the basis of the final segment of this saga.

## Chapter 11

### Phoenix Faculty?

Could the situation described in the preceding chapter be rectified? The question occupied me continuously as well as the management team, which became increasingly conscious of the gains of four years intensive work being eroded by uninformed actions. The question was also interestingly posed by thoughtful rural dwellers and associates who saw the effects of crude political actions on a far reaching and promising strategy in a University environment that should be above such influence. I took comfort in such supportive and informed commentary, which unfortunately was un-newsworthy and politically unattractive in the rural milieu. Achievements to date had been real and known by those who understood need for world-class higher education as the future for Australian agriculture and its industries; but the constraints that had developed to the Strategy were also real.

### Achievements

The end of 1998 was meant to be the period when evaluation of progress and success of the Plan would be done as a means of further building staff confidence in the next round of change. It was also aimed to minimise issues that might otherwise worry staff during the Christmas break. While the latter did not eventuate as a result of the competing decision-making fora and the loss of commitment (refer to the box, *Breaking the Change Chain*) arising from the events described in the previous chapter, the former was attempted through my usual Christmas speech to the staff party. As in other years, the speech was circulated electronically to all staff and interested University persons. Extracts follow.

“Christmas is the traditional time for wishes of goodwill and peace, appropriate messages, considering the press reports of 1998. In fact, the interactions between the Faculty and the rural press closed a circle when the Rural Press Club held their final meeting for the year here at the University. In introducing the Dean, the President of the Press Club alluded to the column inches we had used this year. His final introductory words were ‘following the Dean’s talk, Santa Claus will arrive and give presents to all the boys and girls who have been good this year - Dean, judging by what I have read, you should not expect a present!’ But they gave us one anyway.

Christmas is a good time for us to review where we have come from and where we are going. We have come from competitive organisations into one which can shape the future of education in our fields into the future. I said it *can* shape the future. This will not happen automatically or necessarily as a result of the actions which we have taken so far, significant as they may be in their own right.

The critical issues relate to such matters as global poverty and malnutrition. If we are not interested in the environment, food production, food processing and international food distribution and business, who will be? Food safety, animal welfare and sustainability

integrate these issues which cross the whole faculty. They are the issues against which thinking external observers will ultimately judge us.

So where are we now? Some may think that having fled the slavery of the past, we are still in the wilderness, awaiting a faithful generation, to enter an academic promised land. Not so, it is just that these are tough times - and yet we have accomplished much already and we have handled them well in the main. Let me talk about ten of our key accomplishments over the past four years.” [I then recited the accomplishments of the merger, planning, international profile, research performance, incremental funding, the new curriculum, vocational education, joint funding, corporate management, and the new professoriate - which I would have occasion to list for a more senior University audience within four months.]

### ***Breaking the Change Chain***

Ten phases in the chain of change have been widely described for persons in large organisations. Beginning with **Equilibrium** which is characterised by high energy levels, emotional and intellectual balance, and a sense of inner peace with both personal and professional goals, the first reaction to change is **Denial**, a phase when energy is drained by rationalising denial of the reality of the change. Employees experience negative changes in physical health, emotional balance, logical thinking and normal behaviour patterns. The next phase, **Anger** uses energy to ward off and actively resist the change by blaming others, as frustration, rage, envy and resentment become visible. Staff then enter a **Bargaining** phase and energy is used in an attempt to eliminate the change, and some try to solve the problem through "bargains" designed to compromise the change. Then follows **Chaos** when energy is diffused and feelings of powerlessness, insecurity, disorientation, loss of identity and direction pervade, and defence mechanisms begin to lose usefulness and meaning. Staff then feel **Depression** and have no energy left to produce results. Former defence mechanisms are no longer operable and self-pity, remembering the past, expressions of sorrow, feeling nothingness and emptiness arise. This opens the path to **Resignation** when energy is expended in passively accepting change and most commonly observed as a lack of enthusiasm. New energy arises with **Openness** which is characterised by a willingness to expend energy on what has been assigned to individual, then **Readiness** when the willingness extends to exploring new events and a reunification of intellect and emotions begins, and a **Re-emergence** of feelings of empowerment and employees occurs with a rebirth of growth and commitment.

The change process for the Faculty foresaw these phases and sought to manage the situation accordingly. However, the process wavered when it became clear that the geographic separation of staff allows the periods of chaos and depression to continue longer, as the responses themselves were exacerbated by the isolation. Some individuals then used that situation locally to gain political interest. Once recognised, this situation was considered manageable as part of the change process, until the newly empowered Board reacted and in so doing, became an unwitting ally of the those relatively few staff who sought to compromise the change.



“1999 should see the faculty proceeding step-by-step. Departmental arrangements followed by subject rationalisation. Eliminating inefficient classes and unnecessary duplication across sites and incorporating this into a responsive management accounting system. The Planning and Budget Group of the Faculty has performed well through a difficult time. I wish to publicly commend their professionalism in producing a unanimous view on the shape and form of Land and Food. Such unanimity may well be a first in such circumstances.”

The message at Christmas 1998 was aimed to encourage patience, as agreed with the Board, and under sensitive circumstances for Alan Gilbert’s wider initiatives, but my private fear was that the opportunity to create the bold new dream was being forfeited. Hence, over the same period, a Strategic Deficit Eradication Plan, which could have possibly regained lost ground in the process of upgrading the Faculty was discussed by a small group in the Dean’s office. The concept differed from that discussed by the PBG, which assumed a physical status quo; it was thus confidential from other senior staff and from the Board (with the Vice Chancellor’s agreement), given the apparent divided loyalties of some Board members.

### **Strategy Re-visited**

The Strategic Deficit Eradication Plan (SDEP) had the objective ... *To prepare annual budgets beginning with 1999 which demonstrate a balance by the end of 2001.* It was a final attempt to reinvigorate the Strategic Plan to create something much more than ‘one of the Australian agricultural faculties’. It was maintained as a confidential document presented the University’s Senior Executive. The reason for strict confidentiality were clear; the approach included matters clear to management yet denied some who had gained powerful ears.

The SDEP proposed that the University, the Board and management agree that the budget should be brought into balance. It was considered by Faculty management that a three-year time frame was necessary to achieve such a situation, excluding incentive payments for staff to depart. Prospects for rapid and large increases in non-recurrent income, to which salaries could be transferred, were not considered to be high in the short term. Higher costs of operation for a dispersed campus faculty needed to be acknowledged. The Faculty Plan called for strengthening areas of importance to future industries and issues, and a reduction in services to areas of declining relative significance or which are well served by other providers.

By the time the SDEP was drafted in early 1999, the combined Higher Education, TAFE and Full Fee operational income was \$20.5 million against a budgeted expenditure of \$25.0 million with salaries constituting 92 percent, and operating costs 30 percent, of income. As this was the largest line item, balancing the budget meant focusing on the combined teaching and learning activities of ILFR.

The approach that I recommended after deliberation with my two senior colleagues (Malcolm and Janet) was to reduce the salary total to 80 percent of the teaching and

learning budget – a figure derived from the upper limit within the University. This upper figure was justified on the basis of the dispersed and dual-sector nature of ILFR and equated to reducing salaries from \$18.9 million to \$16.4 million (a 12 percent reduction). To reduce operating expenditure to 20 percent of income equated to a reduction from \$6.1 million to \$4.1 million (a 32 percent reduction); however, given the real cost of operating eight campuses, such a 32 percent reduction was not considered achievable. It was therefore proposed that negotiations take place with the University, or some other source, to provide a campus operating grant of approximately \$2.0 million per annum. The approach, including the proposed campus operating grant, was based on the observation that the Faculty had already reduced operational costs to the minimum for the current organizational structure.

In reaching conclusions that ILFR required this approach simply to continue operations, the SDEP then indicated the inevitable subsequent step of reducing the number of sites where the Faculty operated as traditional college. Significant changes were foreshadowed on the assumption that ongoing subsidy could not be expected to be reliable, even if available. This was the internal message from the University; the fact that the Board rejected this was irrelevant insofar as it was the University's funds. The SDEP noted that even with such politically controversial changes, that the proposal did not address the need to increase program quality, that it still retained risks in not meeting budget expectations, that maintenance of all sites in their traditional form was probably not viable under any scenario, that skilled public relations would be essential for each step, and that implementation of such a proposal required a dedicated team with unreserved support from the University.

The University's Senior Executive understood the plan and its implications, but the Vice Chancellor considered that in the light of wider University interests, no action could be taken on such a politically sensitive strategy until after the next State election. The time frame for that election was up to one and half years.

### *Unripe Time*

With mounting political needs for other new initiatives, the University determined that the time was not ripe for the essential next step in the strategy. When would it be ripe? It depended on the timing of the next election. I had a Cornwellian moment in the presentation we made to the University management in camera when I realised finally that the ripeness of the moment would be after a point when the opportunities had passed. Cornford's (1908) principle of unripe time goes something like ... *it is not the ripe time for this action to be taken Lindsay, although we do think it is a good idea and it does have to happen at some time in the future.* As he says, the fruit known as the meddler, a relative of the Rose family, is somewhat like time; the meddler fruit only looks fit to eat after it begins to decay. In another way, it is the principle of unripe time which made this ripe time for my finishing as Dean.

## End of the Strategy

Three possible outcomes now occurred to persons considering these issues, each requiring significant planning;

- creation of a smaller and respected Faculty
- a quality-compromised Faculty that would be continually subjected to University subsidy and concern
- distribution of the Faculty amongst other faculties of the University of Melbourne and regional TAFE institutions, while retaining a coordination function for agriculture and similar degrees, and continuing selected vocational education at junior colleges.

Notwithstanding these pessimistic viewpoints, the overwhelming need for a higher quality tertiary education service to agriculture and related fields in south-eastern Australia continued to exist. The higher pressure on the environment from agriculture in the region as a function of increased intensity in fact provides the need for a world leading group focusing on land and water management.

To judge the likely future, the preceding possible outcomes needed to be compared with the assets of the Faculty. In terms of taking stock of the Faculty in early 1999, its educational assets could be seen as: high quality staff appointed at senior levels, albeit without appropriate academic and general support for high levels of efficiency; high levels of graduate employment; programs which are generally ascribed a high educational value; physical assets which could be reapplied to other purposes, and association with the leading university. Against these assets were liabilities associated with: high operational overhead costs; inherited occupational health and safety costs including capital costs; difficulties in changing the staffing profile; confused lines of management; accumulated budget deficit, and demoralised staff. The University's involvement in TAFE was the continuing elephant in the room.

### *Complaining the Essence Away*

Wallowing in the pessimism of the reactors against the change and in the mire of yesterday's views of education for agriculture, the atmosphere was polluted by complaints against the University. While the Board fiddled, the Faculty was in flames with the ashes revealing bones that were a replica of the Colleges, not a university. The essence of the Faculty, knowledge and discovery within an atmosphere of love of truth and learning was to be replaced by relaying of information derived from others in a spirit of imparting skills akin to TAFE schools. That essence seemed to disappear, like the Zen cicada ...

*The shell of a cicada:*

*It sang itself away*

*Utterly away ...*

as the complaints about professors, Parkville, the University, ivory towers, indulgent research interests and so on, pervaded the sections of the rural areas that some Board members considered better informed than the educators.

I affirmed my own advice to act quickly or lose the chance to build an acceptable Faculty, which I emphasised by indicating that he would be forced to reconsider his position if a long delay was to occur. In the event, the Vice Chancellor and his Senior Executive effectively withdrew support for the Faculty's revival in favour of other new initiatives that owed or sought political support at the time, in particular the University Square and Melbourne University Private developments.

### **Decanal Declamation**

Following meeting with the Senior Executive, I advised that the time frame for action being dependant on a State election effectively negated any chance of reviving the Strategy, and that the uncertainty of the election date further added risk to any approach to members of both sides of the House. I therefore, in March 1999, informed the Vice Chancellor that I would not seek to continue as Dean, seeing this as the anniversary of my commitment to the Vice Chancellor to assist after the fateful Board meeting at Dookie. I suggested that news of my departure be embargoed until some critical remaining decisions on the new curriculum had been reached. The curriculum change was one of the elements, referred to as rocks in my farewell address; they were part of what I considered the critical foundation for the future Faculty. After a 'eulogy' by Professor Egan, in the manner of Vapereau (nothing is truer than a funeral oration, it tells precisely what the dead man should have been) to the assembled University hierarchy at a farewell dinner, I made my final address, as follows.

“When Mark Twain, otherwise known to his friends as Samuel Clements, visited Longerenong College in 1895, he noted that students were taught ... *the beginnings of such sciences that bear upon agriculture - like chemistry, for instance*. Much has changed since Twain's visit; and in the past four years in what we now know as the Institute of Land and Food Resources at the University of Melbourne. One day we will read the history of these and future changes in a longer context which Twain's ghost may well edit in his style of Australian history which, he thought ... *does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies*.

Columella in *Res Rustica*, his 12 volumes on agriculture, the most comprehensive Roman treatise in existence, observed that ... *whereas for oratory, mathematics, music, ship building or war, one goes to experts for training, the most important art of all, agriculture, is as destitute of learners as it of teachers*. Today we have rectified the destitution of teachers although we continue to face a declining student profile in most countries, because agriculture and universities themselves have changed. Columella's sentiments still have some ring of truth.

It is in that global context that the ILFR was established to bring agricultural and related education into a future oriented to understanding agriculture as a subset within natural resource management, and oriented to producing knowledge and graduates for land management and food production and processing of the future. The very forces which led to the Roman assumption that this, the oldest profession, does not warrant world leading knowledge and education continue to exist. We are

not and will not be a focus for our society unless we can show how we maintain and protect the environment which the public values, how we produce safe food, and how we can responsibly meet international responsibilities in feeding malnourished persons in stressed environments in poor countries.

The precursor of Land and Food, the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture, was launched in 1995 with a quote from Alfred North Whitehead ... *the art of progress is to preserve order amidst change and preserve change amidst order*. Through the efforts of a dedicated team, this has been largely accomplished – but the *art* is not true unless a spirit of further change is also preserved.

Likewise, the efficiencies of the US Land Grant College system, particularly through the co-management of research, education and extension were noted. The ILFR response to form joint planning and funding programs with the State Department of Natural Resource and Environment, CSIRO and selected Research and Development Corporations already bears fruit. The team also based a detailed corporate planning process on assumptions of client service and international leadership in fields of continuing importance for southern Australia.

Perhaps the best expression of the approach of past four years is via an educational analogy. .... Consider a classroom setting of the Professor of Time and Change Management, with a bench in front of the professor, and the class eagerly participating in an interactive learning session. The professor takes a mason jar, places it on the bench and loads it with ten rocks which just fit into the jar. She asks the class ... *is the jar full?* and receives an affirmative reply. *No!* she says, *it is not* ... and proceeds to pour gravel into the jar which seeps into the gaps between the rocks. *Is it full now?* she asks and receives a tentative positive response whereupon she pours fine sand which fills gaps between the gravel. *Is it now full?* The wiser class now indicate that they think not - and she pours water in until the jar is brimming.

*What does this teach us?* asks the Professor of Time and Change Management. One eager student answers ... *no matter how busy the manager is, she can always fit more tasks into the day!* Shaking her head, the professor replied ... *no, it indicates that if that if you are making changes, you must get those large items in first, otherwise they will never go in!*

This is what has been done in Land and Food over the past 50 months; ten major rocks have been put in the jar. Without rehearsing the content of matters well documented elsewhere, let me simply list these ten rocks:

1. **the merger** - seen as impossible by some, a smooth and legislatively binding merger was accomplished ahead of schedule
2. **corporate planning** - a process extending over a year and involving stakeholders arrived at a common view of the future and a management decision document

3. **an international profile** - raised through individuals' reputations, participating in the global agricultural education debate and electronic subject development
4. **improved research performance** - ranking above the Group of Eight average even when the less research intensive college statistics were included
5. **incremental funding** - though industry, government and the University for operations, and capital facilities at Parkville and Werribee food science complex
6. **a new curriculum** - based on expected future needs, reduced duplication, greater student choice, and access to the best international learning aids
7. **vocational education** - building clear progression criteria between vocational and higher education courses, through collaboration, TAFE, and fee for service courses
8. **joint funding** - investing in areas of past under-emphasis to orient the research-education-extension continuum of southern Australia to future responsibilities
9. **corporate management** - new and existing enterprises, including thousands of hectares of farmland, managed on a commercial basis with full costing

- and perhaps most important in terms of pointing to the future direction of the ILFR:

10. **a new professoriate** - a dozen new professors, many in conjunction with industry and government in fields of major focus for the industries and issues of future importance

These are then ten rocks that we needed to place in the jar first. They are in the jar now - please do not take them out! The curriculum proposal will and should attract further debate; do not assume that such a proposal can be anything but a small step in a direction which will require annual and intelligent modifications.

Together with Columella, Cicero the Elder in his, the oldest complete prose word in Latin, *De Agri Cultura*, shows the essential link between the humanities and the sciences of agriculture. For these and other reasons, we need greater integration of agricultural curricula with the humanities which may well come with successive improvements to this first step proposal. Perhaps such a link between the humanities and the sciences was in the minds of our colleagues at our peer Universitas 21 institution, the University of Edinburgh, when it offered its first Chair in Agriculture to Robbie Burns!

As a Dean losing his faculties, I am reminded of the instruction of that British classicist Cornford who in his *Microcosmographia Academica* warns academic managers in the words ... *my heart is full of pity for you, Oh young academic politician. If you will be a politician you will have painful path to follow even though it be a short one before you nestle down into a modest incompetence.* Our team has not accepted that outcome and while I honestly feel that, as Dean, I have done all that my meagre skills allow at this time, the real strength of the team continues to build a Faculty such as Australia has never before enjoyed.

Cornford offers several other ‘gliblets’, all reasons for not making change. It is a tribute to the 450 or so staff of the ILFR that the ‘ten rock’ change has been possible. Our profession should thank them all, and the wider university for a trusting commitment to agriculture.

Cornford has the last word. His final paragraph is apposite, viz ... *that if you find that I was right, remember that other world within the microcosm, the silent reasonable world, where the only action is thought and thought is free from fear. If you go to it now, keeping just enough bitterness to put a pleasant edge on your conversation, and just enough worldly wisdom to save other people’s toes, you will find yourself in the best of all company - the company of clean, humorous intellect; and if you have a spark of imagination and try very hard to remember what it was like to have been [Dean], there is no reason why your brain should ever get woolly, or any one should wish you out of the way.*

May the positive elements of this paragraph apply as I step down as Dean. Departing on leave to write, read and research, one looks forward to doing those things which one enjoys. I like thinking, collating, analysing. I like sitting under trees. I like taking long baths. So just as Newton under his tree and Archimedes in his bath found insight, so, as I embark on sabbatical, I hope that insight finds me.”

## **The Next Step**

I chose to omit anything controversial from my farewell and thus did not use 12 rocks in his analogy. The 11th and 12th rocks were; reductions of staff in line with the Strategic Plan in order to create resources for supporting the new selected fields and Chairs while incidentally trimming the budget, and, progressive withdrawal of higher education services from two colleges and their separation from the University or closure. Notwithstanding my positive words about the changes that should continue, little change could occur through the ensuing year. Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Kwong Lee Dow assumed an overview role in my place while he continued some other responsibilities, and a search for a new Dean was conducted. Under these circumstances, Kwong generously accepted my parting advice and concentrated on the consolidation of the curriculum change as the final ‘rock’ of the initial changes planned in 1995. But he inherited a fine team that would have said that anyway.

Creation of a world class Faculty disappeared from Faculty and University rhetoric by mid 1999, being replaced by an aim to be a leading educator in Australia. Perhaps this may yet provide for subsequent leapfrogging over the stage of building an integrated single Faculty for the wide sector, to an integrated University approach to servicing the sector, as is occurring in leading international universities offering education in agriculture and related sectors. Can a phoenix arise from these ashes of the fire fanned by the wings of vested interests? Probably the only world-leading faculty that I can conceive would be as mythical as that phoenix. Yet the ashes may well fertilise other faculties in the University to serve agriculture and related fields to a higher and even world leadership level than is possible from such traditional agricultural faculties.

Relinquishing the Deanship after four and a bit years – I had said three years to the Vice Chancellor at the time and he said four or five – I left in May 1999 to attend the Mid Term Meeting of the CGIAR in Beijing and to examine a research site of a doctoral student for whom I shared responsibility and continued on to Thailand to begin my chosen sabbatical task of writing a book on Thai Agriculture. After a year which also included time at Stanford and Cornell Universities, the World Bank, and some institutions in Dresden, I returned to the Faculty and the Chair of Agriculture that I had retained. My distanced perspective on the state of the Faculty and its options form the final chapter.

### *Immeasurable Time*

In an earlier Christmas speech when the routine academic response to change of outwaiting the change agent had been heard in the corridors, I saw a need to indicate that I intended to be around for a long time. It worked at the time although no one foresaw that it would be proved untrue within a few years. And yet both the statement and my decision to resign the Dean's role were clear and correct at their times. It was a long time between March 1998 and May 1999, as time is after all, immeasurable in any qualitative way. I do not know the poet who wrote these apt lines at the end of a work describing some beautiful scented flowers and their rapid demise ...

*Farewell, deare flower, sweetly your time ye spent,  
Fit while ye liv'd, for smell or ornament,  
And after death for cures.  
I follow straight without complaints or grief,  
Since, if my scent be good, I care not if,  
It be as short as yours.*



## Chapter 12

### Epilogue

Thus an era's end, few comprehend,  
chances forsaken, and chances taken;  
eulogies commend, so why not defend,  
that steep narrow track, once undertaken?

The freshness of a break, viewing faculties in other countries, and the retention, despite the best of intentions, of Cornford's *just enough bitterness to put a pleasant edge on your conversation, and just enough worldly wisdom to save other people's toes*, provide me a perspective on recorded events of the past thirteen months, and about the possible future of this beleaguered Faculty. Nevertheless, the vision had been lost and the realisation dawned that Nietzsche may have been identified the problem of inconsistent use of the truth by some colleagues when he said ... *the visionary lies to himself, the liar only to others*. I may well have and be lying to myself, and the biases of this account will inevitably be clear to others after more time has passed – if this manuscript is ever read. It is in some ways inevitable that I have misgivings about the apparent future of the Faculty, as ... *the course of a river is almost always disapproved of by its source* (Cocteau). Subsequent events and the future are pondered below.

#### May 1999 to June 2000

The role of Dean has continued to be difficult and credit is due to the incumbents, Professors Kwong Lee Dow and Bob Richardson respectively. The following interpretation of event during their tenure is not intended to detract from their contributions. Nevertheless, the Faculty that is now described is not one destined to make the extent of global contributions that the large budget could have allowed; yet the traditional means of individuals with an international focus, reputation, and research continue to make it a world force in certain disciplines.

The minutes of the meeting of the Faculty (committee), the Planning and Budget Group, and the Board over the ensuing year indicate a containment of activity and the intrusion of a culture that is probably destined to alienate the Faculty from the University. It is unfair to label this as the VCAH culture, yet it derived from some attitudes harboured by some of those staff. Dispersed colleges have little resilience against political influence and having been revived through Board actions, such forces gained ground with a change of State government that arose from urban neglect of rural voting patterns. Potentially positive in so many ways, the easy use of this newfound power is to maintain a culture from the past which identifies with current producers as distinct from future producers, processors and marketers, and to undervalue wider societal values concerning the environment, food safety and global food equity. Within the caveat mentioned in the Foreword, my final observations here seek to postulate a future for agricultural education in south-eastern Australia.

### *Outposted*

The old strategy required a strong link through shared courses, University roles and well managed politics for the development of a strong and respected faculty within the University. If a new strategy is evident, it seems to contain other elements which favour a vocational orientation on a model which contrasts with the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Science's expansion into rural areas, by weakening the Faculty's contact with the central University. As difficult as the role of Dean of the Faculty is already with travel and multiple responsibilities, notwithstanding its apparent current focus on budget cutting and minimal change until politics are more favourable, it may have been made impossible by basing it in both Shepparton and Parkville and adding a Regional portfolio to an overly full Dean's role without additional resources. Visibility and participation within the University determines influence in a manner undocumented in any University strategic plan and forms one part of modern collegiality. One again, Cornford wryly anticipates today's committees, lunches, evening meetings and attendance at the myriad of cocktail functions when he discusses the internal university power structures of which he concludes that *influence may be acquired in exactly the same way as gout*. The hours of driving, and sitting in two offices, while conducting a Regional brief for the University, are already seen by staff as an additional cost to the Faculty, even without a full appreciation of the loss of power which has accrued to the Faculty by outposting from the University.

The Faculty met four times since I stepped down as Dean and now. I was absent overseas on sabbatical. It was correctly absorbed in the undergraduate higher education revisions to curricula in the main, although most of that work was conducted through separate committees. Other minuted matters included: a searching for the new meaning of a change of government in terms of rural activities; a rapid response in terms of establishing a joint Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation with the University of Queensland and a Goulbourn valley University Centre; operational and maintenance issues which impinged on education and which received the earlier negotiated first instalment of the \$6 million cost to bring VCAH buildings into compliance; increases in all student fees, and thinly veiled indications of a new and underlying University attitude to the current form of Faculty's long term viability in a changing market.

The PBG met nine times in the same period and appears to have to have focussed on details of implementing University policies while skirting around the higher level issues of revising the staffing structure, examining and planning for expected changes in income from curriculum changes, and strengthening areas for intended leadership. Issues which were minuted include: concern over expected future problems in terms of perceived reductions in publication rates of staff and post graduates; a reduction in international activity and profile, and the demise of subjects in which few students enrolled. Rural bursaries and other post-election strategies of the University enhanced a culture of serving the status quo. Other matters such as departmental targets used as a basis for planning consolidated the shift from a visionary Faculty while increased income was demanded of

such areas as TAFE subjects, flexible learning, and international students in an environment of acknowledged declining quality of physical and human resources. The PBG joined with Board for a joint planning session in September 1999 eliciting outcomes introduced below.

The Board met six times in the same period and its minutes indicate a continued involvement in management matters including curriculum development. Board membership remained much the same with one addition and one resignation, itself perhaps indicating an expectation of continued involvement in management and a weakening in resource management understanding on the Board. Continued calls for more specific accounts information and business plans delayed consideration of inevitable actions to redress deficits, and the building of a Faculty of international note does not appear in any guise. A budget for the year 2000 with a projected deficit of \$1.16 million was seen as success, and much seems to be implied yet un-minuted about the change of government and opportunities for incremental funding for rural and regional activities in the State. By May 2000, the newly appointed Dean sought to expand income through Faculty business approaches, redefine the role of the Board to one of assisting in strategy, politics and business linkages, and to enhance the role of the PBG; the first view, possibly a Board suggestion, seemed to be rapidly redefined into the approaches of the past with a reliance on government in their rural honeymoon period, while the redefinition of roles remain an important objective.

The joint Board and PBG planning session provides the clearest indication of the significant change introduced through the Board's intervention. The vision I subscribed to in the 1995-1999 period was one of international leadership in a few selected fields of major future importance the environment of southeastern Australia, supported by credible activities in other fields through exchange of staff, students and courses with other leading institutions in other countries (refer to the vision statement of the Strategic Plan in that chapter). The vision was *ILFR is the Leading Centre for Learning and Discovery working in Partnership with Industry and Communities to provide exciting and sustainable futures for all stakeholders*. The minutes of the session exude a flavour of education being primarily related to employment in existing industries interpreted by existing producers within the State. This is remarkably close to the situation from which the Strategic Plan had sought to move. Relinquishing international leadership aspirations and emphasising training above education and in particular research, may well complete the reverse takeover of the Faculty discussed by some VCAH staff in 1996 and presumably even before that time.

### **Possible Futures**

I postulated future from the ashes of the vision, but they are unfounded as any others'. I might know the faculty intimately in some ways, but in others I am out of date – far out of date about the balance of powers that impact on the Faculty. I know the Bob Richardson is having a hard job, in some ways a continuation of the past issues of misplaced power. It is my hope that he can shed some rural campuses to responsible TAFE Institutes and get the Faculty focussed on higher education and research. We will all see.

As for me, I am like an old colonial ‘staying on’. It is a sobering experience to arrive back into an environment which one had tried to change. Aside from the sourness of the grapes of Cornford’s (1908) *just enough bitterness*, settling in to a regular academic role, as alluded to in my farewell address in Chapter 11, provides a comfortable intellectual life. I wish to make a significant contribution, and believe I can within the pessimistic outline above of individuals conducting world-class work and thus assisting the University’s and Faculty’s reputation. I was once able to learn quickly, I still like to learn. If I am called on to impart this through lectures, I may be just one more lecturer, according to Cornford’s definition, who is a sound scholar chosen to teach on the grounds that he was once able to learn.

A blessing of the gods may well be to know the opposing forces on one at any one time. If so, I am blessed to know the source of the joy I feel to be able to move into the University as an academic and enjoy the wonderful facilities which are forbidden to deans by their time conflicts, while also knowing the source of my pessimism about the Faculty and its intellectual viability. The latter expresses itself in me as a tiring weight in the manner of Stephane Mallarme’s description of ... *a weariness, outworn by civil hope, still clings*. Between Cornford and Mallarme is a vast and fertile ground for advancing agriculture; it is one which I am now cultivating.

### *Hope*

In spite of the sometimes pessimistic views which slip into this document, I also conceive cycles in the fashion of agriculture in society. Perhaps we are seeing a means of re-linking city and country in our broader society a manner which has never occurred within Australia. The value of rural retreats, the mixing of tourism and health management with farming now attract the more educated segments of the population, and may well filter to others in a recognition of Cowper’s view that,

*God made the country, and man made the town.  
What wonder, then, that health and virtue abound  
and least be threatened in the fields and groves.*

As agricultural and related education around the world languishes, the relevant commercial and resources sectors appear increasingly well served by a range of other sources and faculties. This story is one the reactions of a traditional group of agricultural and related educational institutions and concerned persons to their reorientation to a future which would ensure the viability of those institutions. Where once, applied plant breeding, soil science, and biochemistry were best represented in agriculturally oriented faculties, today when these served by other groups in a more prestigious manner. Opportunities in agribusiness, food science, and resource management now exist for future dominance in a similar applied sense. This story of an opportunity to secure a future of international leadership may well be judged in terms of its obvious successes in most fields of endeavour, but to those who saw the vision become a mirage and saw it fade with personal and

opportunity costs. For me there was a personal cost and benefit, as I summarize in the following final section.

Rights and wrongs are nought, do but what one ought,  
for plans and programs must needs omit,  
much of wisdom sought, yet not in schools taught,  
of cyclic change, to which all submit.

## Consumed by the Cause: A More Personal Reflection

The cause which I adopted and became, progressively consumed me. I saw the vision of a quite different Faculty with a perspective on agriculture which accepted that science and other faculties would continue to cater for areas once thought the preserve of agricultural education; that saw the need for society's emerging requirements to be met in education of future leaders in the field and for the human aspects of agriculture which this entailed, and that global and selfish needs would continue to require that responsible educators were willing to insist on some non-commercial aspects of courses being retained in a balanced curriculum. So I was drawn to the vision in the manner perhaps less worthy yet similar in effect to that described by Aquinas who wrote ... '*he who is drawn to something desirable does not desire it as a thought but as a thing*'.

Having ensured that a long range strategy had been outlined simultaneously with the smooth merging of the colleges with the University, I enjoyed the post-merger period as a preparation for the next challenge of reshaping the Faculty. It was a beautiful period between the demands of merger and reorganisation of which a haiku from Blyth's 'Zen in Oriental and English Literature' reminds me, ...

*A Butterfly  
Asleep, perched upon  
The temple bell.*

The essence of the change required to realise the vision was contained within the Faculty, through the motivations of many staff. To those who saw change as the introduction of a foreign system, who may have been the ones who most strenuously opposed change, the message while morally acceptable interrupted the cosy status quo. The means of encouraging those with the vision and skills, and complementing these with new staff, is reflected in that *imprisoned splendour* of which Browning wrote:

*To know  
Rather consists in opening out a way  
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
Than in effecting entry for a light  
Supposed to be without.*

And so, during the reorganisation period, it was at first hard for me to accept that some colleagues were actively feeding misinformation to the press, as they hid behind defence of traditions in the manner of Johnson's patriotism as '*the last refuge of a scoundrel*'. The press war is the only visible debris of that time, although it was simply one part of a diverse campaign which was made worse by my additional objective of empowering the Board without ensuring impartiality and their adequate knowledge. The initial University strategy in this public confrontation, to which I agreed, was to answer all attacks honestly in the expectation that the issues would blow over and the record would indicate the truth from at least the University's statements.

However, I did not answer ridiculous claims and sensational stories, and as the volume of articles grew, a subsequent strategy of silence was agreed. This suited me better, and freed up about eight hours of interview time per day, and I soon, correctly or not, concluded that the ongoing press debate reflected that of the ignorant in the vein of Roshì (Laotse) *'he who knows, speaks not; he who speaks knows not'*.

To see the period objectively is difficult, and I am inclined to blame someone, myself or others, for something that may have just been an incident of no consequence. Blaming others in the way of Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell', viz *'the fox condemns the trap, not himself'*, was the easiest initial emotion, and has subsided to more generous feelings of others' motivations as Wordsworth thought in *'wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar'*. Nevertheless, at the time, the personal impact of the whole episode was great, and possibly made worse as I had, with Don Quixote, stoically thought that *'a knight-errant must never complain of a wound, even though his entrails are dropping out of it'*.

I had made the merger and subsequent reorganisation my personal mission and became overly attached to it, such that interference with the plan was a personal affront to me. A dawning realisation that my life to that time had been allocated to serially engrossing causes like Shakespeare's according to the sonnet lines,

*My nature is subdued  
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand'*

promoted me to consider the nature of the cause separate from myself. The cause still seemed correct and I remained offended on its behalf. However, my association to it was not critical and the revisions which were now inevitable would reduce the outcome to something unworthy of the previous effort. Resignation was the correct response although not all reasons given, especially the public statements, were correct. I had become too close to the vision and had been blinded by its glory yet could not avert my eyes. Thus I suffered grief as if a person to whom I been attached had been taken from me. My own poetry reflects some of these moments, but less eloquently, I now see, than Rossetti's 'The Woodspurge' in which is described an anguished soul bent over a meadow in grief for such a time that all that is noticeable is a plant, the woodspurge, about which the griever learns something as a product of his very grief ...

*'From perfect grief there need not be  
Wisdom or even memory:  
One thing then learnt remains to me -  
the woodspurge has a cup of three'.*

Though my own loss was less severe than Rossetti's, the post Deanal sabbatical allowed me much time for reflection to see more in the events and the University; it also fostered a resurgence of those enduring yet usually subverted qualities of spiritual interest in life and others. This narrative itself is but one product of that blessing. Thus the Duchess in 'Alice In Wonderland' was again correct when Lewis had her say *'everything's got a moral if only you can find it'*.

To the University, the disappointment of being unable to effect a significant increase in global standing for its agricultural and related activities is tolerable. Individuals who understood the foregone potential expressed both their sense of frustration and concern over the apparent personal cost which accrued to me. Grateful for their comfort and acknowledgment, I am now more conscious that there is no place in history for any Dean, even the outstanding and founding Dean, Wadham, whose own tenure at the University was threatened and his reputation continually challenged since he refused to follow the technical research ethic personally. If the University saw the preparations for the merger and reorganisation over the years as lost in the conflict of 1998, they also saw their 'messiah' crucified. The expectations of the task were great, the accomplishments exceeding what was seen as possible, yet ultimately falling short of the potential. Under such circumstances the saviour must be the one who suffers on behalf of all. I was and am hardly a role model for such a hero; perhaps Zerubbabel, that messianic end of David's line and contemporary of Joshua mentioned in snippets of 1 Kings, Haggai and Zechariah, provides an analogy.

*academies requiring change  
need backing from above  
and leadership from outside blood  
which old passions can't estrange*

*thus with resolve did they aspire  
to merge and organise  
a school, sector-wide, of great size  
under their messiah  
yet as all changes, so does time  
when politics inspire  
the diametric paradigm  
and force leaders to retire*

*now pensioned soldier tends the vine  
as most seek but what's stable  
thus the modern Zerubbabel  
ends the once Royal line*



## References

- A\*DEC (1999) A\*DEC and Virtual Universities: Toward Common Vision and Action. <http://www.ces.ncsu.vdu/adece/>
- Anderson, R. (1994) Science, Technology and Education – The Challenge to Education. *Agricultural Science* 8(2):37-40.
- Avery, D.T. (1995) *Saving the Planet with Pesticides and Plastic*. Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, 432 pp.
- Bardsley, B. and Falvey, L. (1996) Training and Education within the Dairy Industry: The Future. Invited paper presented to the Dairy Industry Association, Victoria, 11th Annual Conference Strengthening our Industry through Membership, Melbourne May 1996.
- Bawden, R. (1992) Systems Approaches to Agricultural Development: The Hawkesbury Experience. *Agricultural Systems*, 40:153-176.
- Bell, J.H., and Pandey, U.S. (1987). Post secondary farmer education: Past neglect and future prospects. *Forum of Education*, 46, (1), 26.
- Capp, E. and Caro, D. (1992) Administrative Review of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture. Report of the University of Melbourne.
- CAST (1996) Scientific Societies: Conversations on Change. Council for Agricultural Science and Technology [www:http://www.netins.net/showcase/cast/scisocs.htm](http://www.netins.net/showcase/cast/scisocs.htm)
- Cecchetti, C.L., Sommer, R. and Leising, J. G. (1992) Australian Students' Perceptions of Agricultural Careers. *Journal of Agricultural Education*. Spring 30-35.
- Chisholm, A. (1992) Australian Agriculture: A Sustainability Story. *Australian Journal of Agricultural Economics* 36:1-30.
- Cornford, (1998) *Microcosmographia Academica: Being a Guide for the Young Academic Politician*. Bowes and Bowes, Cambridge
- Curtis, F (1985) Demand and Supply Considerations for Evaluating a New Distance Education Programme in Natural Resources Planning and Management in North America. *The Environmentalists* 5(2):129-135.
- Danbom, D. B. (1992) Research and Agriculture: Challenging the Public System. *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* 7(3):99-104.
- Dawkins (1988) Higher Education - A Policy Statement . Parliament of Australia, July 1988, Canberra
- Dent, S. (1995) Learning the Value of Study. *Weekly Times (Victoria)*, 6 Dec., p.3.
- Derera, N., Martin, P. and Cadman, A. (1994) Reform of University Education in Agriculture. *Agriculture Science* 8(2):30-32.
- Dillman, D. A., Christenson, J. A., Salant, P., and Warner, P.D. (1995) What the Public Wants from Higher Education; Workforce Implications from a 1995 National Survey. Social and Economics Sciences Research Centre, Washington, D.C. Technical Report Number 95-52.
- Elliot, M. (1995) Agricultural Science Cut-Off Scores – Why so Low? *Agricultural Science* 8 (3): 32-33.
- Ellyard, P. (1996) Presentation at the University of Melbourne For Uni Life 1996. Dr Peter Ellyard, Executive Director of Preferred Futures, Melbourne, Australia.
- FAFH (1995) Short Term Plan of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture, University of Melbourne.
- Falvey, L. and Bardsley, B. (1995) An Integrated Agricultural Research Education and Outreach System for Victoria: Adapting the USA Land Grant College Concept to Australia. *Agricultural Science* 8(5): 35-38.
- Falvey, L. and Maguire, C. (1997) The Emerging Role for Agricultural Education in Producing Future Researchers. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education* 4(1): 15-21.
- Falvey, L. (1996) Food Environmental Education: Agricultural Education in Natural Resource Management, The Crawford Fund and the Institute for International Development, (ISBN 064629363X) 280pp. (1996).
- Falvey, L. (1997) Attracting the Shining Stars to Agriculture. *Agricultural Science* 10 (4): 20-23.
- Falvey, L. (1997) Formal Agricultural Education: Origins of Agricultural Knowledge Systems. *Asian Agri-History* 1 (3): 191-206
- Falvey, L. (1997) Industry launch of the Institute of Land and Food Resources, 1 July 1997 at the Hyatt on Collins.
- Falvey, L. (1998) Are Faculties of Agriculture Still Necessary? *Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering*, Focus 103:2-8

- Falvey, L. (2000) Strategic Management and Planning: Case Study: University of Melbourne and ILFR. Paper Invited for the Seminar Strategic Management and Planning held at Kasetsart University, Bangkok, 14 January 2000.
- Falvey, L. and Bardsley, B. (1997). Land and Food: Agricultural and Related Education in the Victorian Colleges and the University of Melbourne. University of Melbourne
- Falvey, L. and Forno, D. (1997) Institutional arrangements in agricultural education, extension and research: Lessons for international development. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education* 4:7-14.
- Falvey, L. and Matthews, B. (1999) Stakeholder Views on Agricultural Education in Australia. *Journal of International Agricultural Extension Education* 6(1):23-35
- Falvey, L. and O'Brien, M. (1993) Client Perceptions Review: Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Melbourne. Consultancy report of Falvey Consulting Pty Ltd and Miriam O'Brien Consulting, Melbourne.
- Ferguson, J. and Simpson, R. (1995) The Australian Rural Labour Market. A National Farmers Federation Research Paper. Vol. 9. November.
- Gilbert, A. (1996) Building on Quality. University of Melbourne Corporate Plan, University of Melbourne
- Gilbert, A. (1997) Earning Esteem. University of Melbourne Corporate Plan, University of Melbourne
- Global Alliance, (1997) Australian Higher Education in the Era of Mass Customisation. Appendix 11 of the Review of Higher Education and Policy commissioned by DEETYA.
- Greenland, D. J. (1992) Review of Agricultural and Related Education Consequent Upon the Merger of VCAH and the University of Melbourne. Report commissioned by the University of Melbourne.
- Hamilton, G. (1995) Wading Through the Tertiary Education Options. A paper delivered at a conference convened by the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, November. Melbourne: AIAS.
- ILFR (1996) Strategic Plan of the Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne
- ILFR (1996, 1997, 1998) Minutes of Planning Retreats held at McMillan College, Burnley College, and the naval and Military Club Melbourne respectively. Internal ILFR documents.
- ILFR (1997) Departmental arrangements of ILFR. Internal document of the Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne
- ILFR (1999a) Documents prepared in the first quarter of 1999. Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne
- ILFR (1999b) Revision of Departmental titles. Internal document of the Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne
- Kellogg Foundation (1994) Food Systems Professions Education Initiative: Preparing Food Systems Professionals for the 21st Century. Overview and Project Synopsis.
- Kilpatrick, S. (1996) Change, Training and Farm Profitability. A National Farmer's Federation Research Paper. Vol. 10. November 1996.
- Kotrlík, J. W. (1987) Factors Related to the Career Decisions of Seniors who Have Taken Vocational Agriculture. *The Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*, 28 (4): 50-56.
- Krejcie R. V. and Morgan, D. W. (1970) Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*. 30 (2): 607-610.
- Lam, J. Y. (1987) Determinants of Educational Plans of the Indeterminate High School Graduate. *The Journal of Educational Administration*, 20, 2: 213-229.
- Lees, J. W., Da Roza, G. D., and Carey, E. M. (1982) Competence and Curriculum: A Study of the National Agricultural Education System. Australian Rural Adjustment Unit, University of New England, Armidale, NSW.
- Loquet, C. A. C. (1996). Market Research Study: Report of Focus Group Interviews with New Entrants to the Bachelor of Agricultural Science, Bachelor of Forest Science, Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture and Natural Resource Management). Report to the Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture at the University of Melbourne, April 1996.
- Lowe, P. and Bodiguel, L.M. (1990) Rural Studies in Britain and France. Bellhaven Press London.
- Lucas, I.A.M. (1986) The Current Situation of Agricultural Education and Research in Universities. *Agricultural Progress* Vol. 61. 82-88.
- Maguire, C.J. (1997) Future Prospects for Agricultural Education Systems. Paper presented At Asian Productivity Organisation's Symposium of Agricultural Education Systems, Tokyo, August 1, 1997.
- Mallory, M., and Sommer, R. (1986). High School Student Images of Agricultural Careers. *California Agriculture*, 40 (3/4):4-6.

- Marsh, S. P., and Pannell, D. J. (1997) The Changing Relationship between Private and Public Sector Agricultural Extension in Australia. Paper presented to the 41st Annual Conference of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society. Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. 21-24 January 1997.
- Martin, R. A. (1985) Perceptions by Nontraditional and Traditional Agricultural Students Towards Their High School Preparation and Work Barriers. *The Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*, 26 (2): 18-24.
- Matthews, B., and Falvey, L. (1996) Year 10 Students' Perceptions of Agricultural Careers: Victoria (Australia). *Journal of International Agricultural Extension Education* 6(1):55-67.
- McColl (1991) Report of the Review of Agricultural and Related Education. Departments of Employment, Education and Training, and Primary Industries and Energy, Canberra (Volumes 1 & 2).
- Meyer, J. H. (1997) Re-engineering the Land Grant College of Agriculture. University of California, Davis.
- Meyer, J. H. (1997) Rethinking the Outlook of Colleges Whose Roots have been in Agriculture. University of California, Davis.
- Meyer, J.H. (1993) The Stalemate in Food and Agricultural Research, Teaching, and Extension. *Science* 260:881-1007.
- Meyer, J.H. (1995) Transforming the Land Grant College of Agriculture for the Twenty-first Century. University of California, Davis.
- Monteith, N. & Field, S. (1995). From the Valleys to the New Horizons. Australian Institute of Agricultural Science Conference, November 1995, Melbourne.
- NASULGC (1996) From Issues to Action: A Plan for Action on Agriculture and Natural Resources for The Land Grant Universities. National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, Washington DC.
- NCAE (1997) Reinventing Agricultural Education for the year 2020: A Call to Action. National Council for Agricultural Education Advertising leaflet.
- Niland, J. (1998) The Fate of Australian Science - The Future of Australian Universities. Address to the National Press Club, Canberra, 25 February 1998.
- NRC (1995) Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities : A Profile. National Research Council Committee on the Future of Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture, Board on Agriculture. National Academy of Sciences, USA.
- NRC (1996). Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities: Public Service and Public Policy. National Research Council Committee on the Future of Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture, Board on Agriculture. National Academy of Sciences, USA.
- NRC (1996). National Science Education Standards. National Research Council National. Academy Press, Washington, DC.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (1987). National Policies and Agricultural Trade. Country Study Australia. Paris: OECD Publication Service.
- Parliament of Victoria (1997) Act No. 19/1997 providing for the Merger of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture with the University of Melbourne. Parliament of the State of Victoria, Melbourne
- Pinstrup-Andersen, P. and Pandya-Lorch, R. (1994). The Global Food System for the 21st Century: Policy Issues and Challenges. Paper prepared for W.K. Kellogg Foundation Sponsored Foods Systems Professions Education Initiative, Denver, Colorado, June 12, 1994.
- Prinsley, R., Dore, J., Marks, N., McGuikan, N. and Thompson, P. (1994) The Role of the Private Sector in Extension – A report to the Research and Development Corporations. RIRDC Occasional Paper No. 94/3.
- Riley Memorial Foundation (1995) Food and Agricultural Research in Changing Times: Highlights of a National Round Table. RMF, Maryland.
- RMF (1995) Food and Agricultural Research in Changing Times: Highlights of a National Round Table. Riley Memorial Foundation, Maryland.
- Schedvin, C. B. (1994) Working Committee Report. December 1994, University of Melbourne.
- Scottish Agricultural College (1996) The Scottish Agricultural College Strategic Plan 1996-2000. SAC, Edinburgh.
- UM (1998) Universitas 21 benchmarking information. Internal Document of the University of Melbourne.
- University of Melbourne (1997) Regulations 5.1.R3 and 5.1.R4. to create the Institute of Land Food Resources as a faculty with the Board as a committee of faculty.

University of Western Australia (The) (1996) Agricultural Careers Survey Report No. 95/5. Prepared by the Institutional Research Unit, Planning Services, The University of Western Australia.

UWA (1995). Agriculture Career Survey: Interim Report Institutional Research Unit of the University of Western Australian Working Paper 1995/15, August 1995.

VCAH Council (1997) Minutes of Council, February to June, 1997.

Victoria Tertiary Admissions Centre (1996) Extract from the VTAC Preference Distribution Analysis. November 1996 for agriculture and related courses.

VTAC (1996). Preference Distribution Analysis. Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre.

W K Kellogg Foundation (1994) Food Systems Professions Education Initiative: Preparing Food Systems Professionals for the 21st Century. Overview and Project Synopsis.

Wilkins, J. (1995) Sowing the seeds. A paper delivered at a conference convened by the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, November, Melbourne: AIAS.

[www:http://www.netins.net/showcase/cast/scisocs.htm](http://www.netins.net/showcase/cast/scisocs.htm).

## **Final Word**

... civilised man oft scrapes the veneer,  
to reveal the beast inspiring fear;  
our faults repeat as we ignore;  
To covet, is to make our souls poor ...